STREET SPIRIT

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JUSTICE NEWS & HOMELESS BLUES IN THE BAY AREA

Rallying to Save the Safety Net





A broad coalition of seniors, anti-hunger groups and homeless activists rallied at the Capitol Building in Sacramento to protest Gov. Schwarzenegger's proposed cutbacks.

A rally in Sacramento confronts the governor with the human costs of cutting aid to the poor, elderly and disabled.

by Michael Diehl





A spirited rally was held in Sacramento on May 12 to protest the cuts to social services proposed in Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's budget. More than a thousand people marched in a joint action held by the Hunger Action Coalition, seniors, and homeless advocates. A few days later, the disabled community turned out in force on May 20 to protest cuts to In-Home Support Services (IHSS) and other cuts in assistance to disabled people.

Despite the importance of these issues to the future of millions of people in the state and the size of the demonstrations, both protests were virtually ignored — or suppressed — by the corporate media.

The Alameda County Food Bank, due to the dedication of Jessica Bartholow, took a lead role in the East Bay in organizing for this year's Save the Safety Net rally. Homeless people were mobilized by the Community Organizing Team (COT) from Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency (BOSS); and participants came to the rally from several BOSS programs, including the Oakland Homeless Project, McKinley House, the Harrison Street shelter and the Multi-Agency Service Center. The Hunger Action Coalition provided bus transportation to Sacramento.

Also out in force and in big numbers were marchers from St. Mary's Center, which brought homeless seniors from Oakland, the Women's Economic Agenda Project and the Gray Panthers.

The Hunger Action Coalition led the march around the capitol building. A state trooper stopped us temporarily, and asked who our boss was. The marchers responded with a chant of: "We are the People! We are the Boss!" Other chants were: "No More Empty Plates in the Golden State!," "No More Cuts!" and "We're Hungry and We Ain't Going to Take It Anymore!"

With all the seniors marching with us, we formed a full circle almost around the capitol with more than 1,000 marchers.

When I returned to Berkeley after the Sacramento rally and gave an eyewitness report on the successful protest to local groups, Food Not Bombs and other activists recalled being beaten by Sacramento police during their protests of bioengineering at last year's meeting of the WTO Agricultural Ministers. After also being beaten in Miami while protesting the Free Trade Agreement for the Americas and shot with wooden bullets at the antiwar protests at the Oakland port, they were glad to hear that our protest was not met with similar force. I told them that marching with seniors helps.

The governor, in releasing his revised budget on May 13, backed down on several of the proposed cuts and caps in funding due to a steady outcry by activists who have come to Sacramento for many days of protest since December.

Schwarzenegger has given up his attempt to push for a further 10 percent cut in reimbursements to Medi-Cal providers in spite of an earlier proposed 5 percent cut being blocked in court. He has dropped his effort to cap enrollment in the Medi-Cal Healthy Families program that provides health care for very poor families. He has stopped his attempt to drop the AIDS Drug Assistance Program.

The governor also has withdrawn his proposal to cut reimbursements for spouses of the disabled and parents of disabled children who are acting as In Home Support Service providers. He has decided to support the renewal of AB 2034 funding for housing for the homeless. Utilizing this funding, Berkeley's mental health department has been able to get 80 homeless people with serious mental health problems off the streets through its Assertive Community Treatment program.

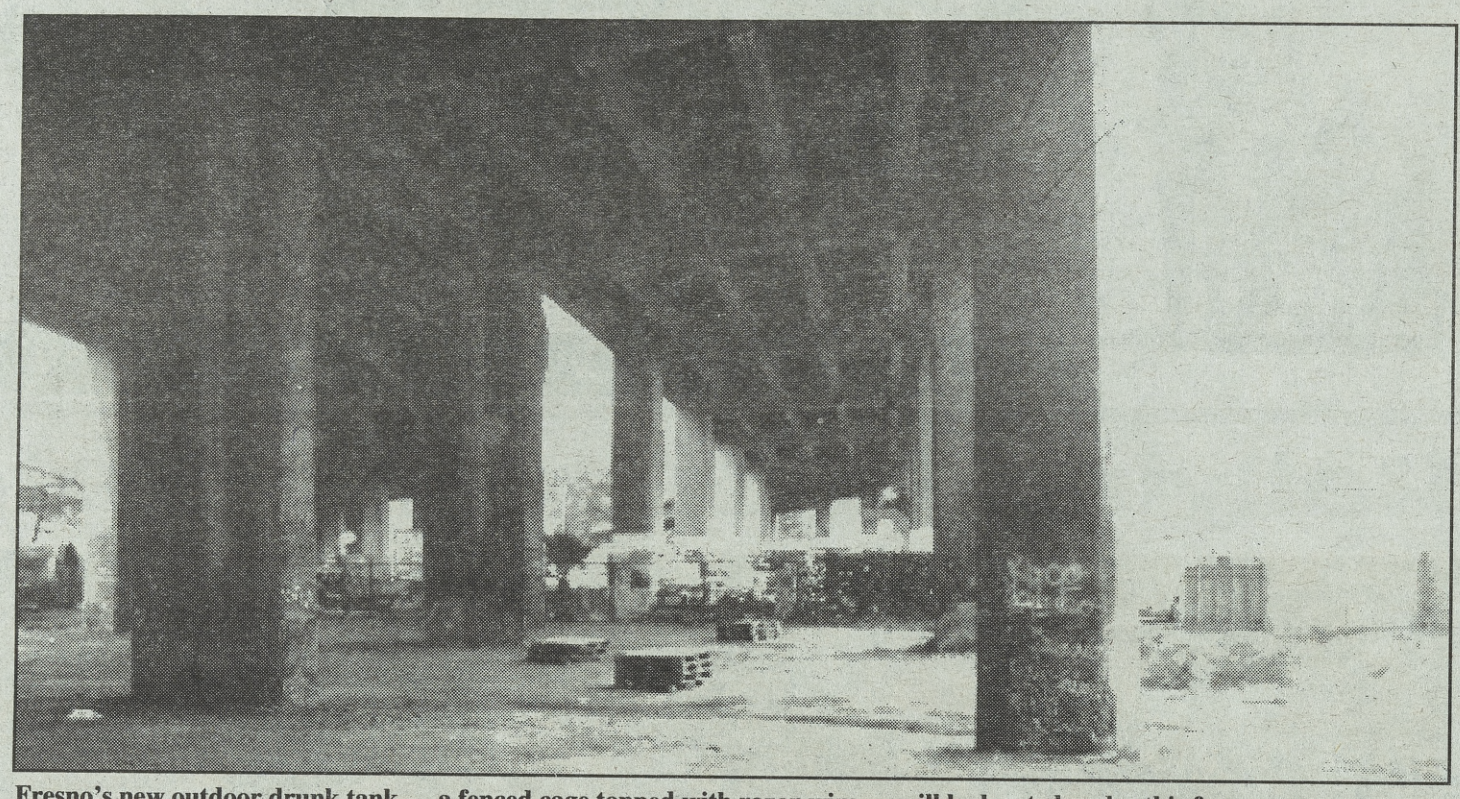
However, the governor's revised budget proposed significant cuts in local bus transit, such as AC Transit in the East Bay, which promise to quite negatively impact the ability of poor people to get around and

See **Rallying to Save the Safety Net** *page 15*

An Outdoor Drunk Tank Topped with Razor Wire

Fresno officials launch a humiliating attack on the homeless — an outdoor drunk tank where they will be put on public display behind a chain-link fence topped with razor wire.

by Mike Rhodes



Fresno's new outdoor drunk tank — a fenced cage topped with razor wire — will be located under this freeway overpass.

The City Council in Fresno is moving forward to build an outdoor drunk tank for homeless people, surrounded by a chain-link fence and topped with razor wire, perhaps the only one of its kind in this country.

The drunk tank will be operated under a freeway overpass by the Rescue Mission, a Christian group which also operates a downtown homeless shelter. City officials call it an "innovative" way to save money. The facility will be located in the epicenter of Fresno's homeless population.

While City officials claim that this is not another attack on the homeless, critics disagree. Speaking before the Fresno City Council on May 11, Gloria Hernandez said, "I have a lot of concerns with this proposal. If we have a drunk tank, both rich and poor ought to go in there. I hope that when you look at this, the money is not important — the people are important."

Edie Jessup said that she was concerned about the "20,000-plus homeless in Fresno and Madera who are at risk because of the eroding safety net." Jessup went on to say that "an open-air drunk tank is not a solution to the problem, and this has a terrible appearance for the City of Fresno. I can only imagine the legal and human rights suits that the establishment of this facility will create."

The drunk tank will be operated by the Rescue Mission under an overpass on G street in downtown Fresno. Temperatures get up to 110 degrees in the summer and down to 28 degrees in the winter.

Larry Arce, director of the Rescue Mission, said that he believes the people brought into the drunk tank his organization will run are in need of spiritual guidance to resolve their problems. It appears that Fresno taxpayers will be paying for evangelical Christians to proselytize persons picked up for public intoxication.

Fresno Police Captain Greg Garner said that it costs $170 to book someone in the downtown jail for public intoxication. He claims the City will save up to $400,000 a year if everyone picked up were taken to the open-air drunk tank, rather than being booked into the County jail.

But even Captain Garner admits that not every person picked up will be taken to the drunk tank instead of the jail. Therefore, the potential savings will be considerably less than stated.

Garner said that "no combative individuals, nobody on drugs, no non-ambulatory individuals, and no women will be taken to the Rescue Mission facility."

Some critics have suggested that the discrimination based on sex is illegal.

Other critics have expressed concern that this experiment will end up costing the City money if someone dies or is seriously injured due to negligence from the inadequately trained staff at the Rescue Mission. One $10 million lawsuit arising from the lack of care would make this a very expensive social experiment for the City of Fresno. As far as anyone can determine, the supervisors at the Rescue Mission will not be trained medical professionals prepared to deal with the variety of problems they could encounter with the individuals they have imprisoned.

But these concerns did not deter the enthusiasm for the project by Fresno City Councilmembers. Brian Calhoun was almost giddy, saying that he was "very intrigued and impressed with this approach. This is a win-win. A thumbs up for a very good way for dealing with this population."

Even our resident liberal, Tom Boyajian, voted to support the proposal. Boyajian dismissed the potential to convert the prisoners to Christianity by saying, "Maybe you will give them handouts and say this is the kind of thing that maybe can help you because you have an issue that you need to take care of. You are trying to bring more humanity to these individuals."

The outdoor drunk tank is the latest in a long series of attacks on this city's homeless population. It started with a push to move the homeless south of Ventura; homeless people were harassed when they were in the downtown core where builders and developers are planning major redevelopment projects.

About the same time, an anti-panhandling ordinance was passed and a public relations campaign implemented to convince the public to not donate cash to the poor and homeless. The public was told that the homeless would use money to buy drugs and alcohol.

Earlier this year, the City of Fresno bulldozed the homeless encampments on Santa Clara and throughout the downtown area, saying that they were cleaning up the streets to prevent crime and drug use.

Now, we have another project gearing up to further attack and humiliate the homeless — an outdoor drunk tank where they will be put on public display behind a chain-link fence topped with razor wire. The plan for an outdoor drunk tank is not only dangerous to the health of those unlucky enough to end up inside, but is probably blatantly illegal.

The purpose of these attacks on the homeless is to make life so miserable for them that they simply give up and move to some city that is not as hostile. There is another way: The City of Fresno could treat each resident with dignity and respect. They could provide services that would help the homeless live a better life. They could open up some of the empty buildings downtown as homeless shelters.

Community activists can be supportive by helping groups that support the homeless — groups such as Food Not Bombs, the St. Benedict Catholic Worker, and the Sleeping Bag Project. It is important for the progressive community to keep the homeless on the radar screen and advocate for their fair treatment.

The Indymedia staff in Fresno will continue to follow the story and bring you news from the War Zone in this Tale of Two Cities. Contact: www.fresnoalliance.com/home

The News of Abuse of Iraqi Prisoners of War

by Maureen Hartmann

This morning's Chronicle had horrible pictures of abuse of Iraqi POWs by their American captors.
But I also think of the pain and degradation that the homeless go through every day, often for years.
There is the anxiety about where their next meal will come from, the anxiety and fear of living outside at night, not knowing if their few possessions will be taken away by the Department of Public works.
There is the humiliation of having to beg from passers-by with whom one has no former relationship.
Even your life may be destroyed by a fellow homeless person who is desperate and over the edge.
The tortured person is at the mercy of his/her captors.
The homeless person is at the mercy of the environment, the weather and the kindness of strangers, to survive.

Starstruck

by Michael Creedon

I get starstruck every day.
It comes from living on the street.
I got the blues in both my eyes;
I guess that's why the ladies cry.
This pavement is so hot
You could cook an egg on it.
Or a human brain. I often do.

It's not so slick, this life I chose.
I get starstruck by the sky.
It comes from living on the street.
There's nothing between you and
Heaven when you ain't got
A roof over your head.
I get starstruck by the night.
It seems it never leaves my sight.

I'm just a nondescript hobo.
You'd never know that I'm a genius.
The lights go on when I enter the room.
But I don't enter the room.

Street Spirit

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Street Spirit welcomes submissions of articles, poems, photos and art.

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'UNCONSTITUTIONAL AS WELL AS INHUMAN'

Report documents widespread police abuse of homeless people in Berkeley

by Terry Messman

Berkeley has a well-earned reputation as a progressive city of diversity and tolerance, a champion of human rights, and an historic fountainhead of important social-change movements. Berkeley's relatively liberal city administration likes to declare that it does more and spends more per capita to help homeless people than nearly any other community.

It is all the more disturbing and disgraceful, then, that an extensively researched report to the Berkeley Police Review Commission has exposed a startling number of cases of police mistreatment of homeless people. In this supposed liberal bastion of civil rights, police have been committing widespread abuses against poor people, including improper searches, discriminatory enforcement of laws, the criminalization of people forced to sleep outside, and persecution of people who have committed no crime except being homeless.

The extensive report on police mistreatment of homeless people was compiled and written by Tirien Steinbach and Osha Neumann, staff attorneys of the Suitcase Clinic Legal Services, a project of the East Bay Community Law Center. Steinbach and Neumann are two of the preeminent attorneys defending the civil rights of homeless people in the East Bay, and between them, have decades of experience and legal expertise in monitoring human rights violations.

Suitcase Clinic Legal Services delivered the eight-page report as a policy complaint to the Police Review Commission (PRC). According to Barbara Atard, head of the PRC, a formal hearing on the report will be held by the commission in late June or early July (Call the PRC at (510) 981-4950 for the date and time of the hearing.)



A new report faults Berkeley police for mistreating homeless people. Copwatch photo

CRIMINALIZING SLEEP

The report exposes the inhumanity of predawn sweeps conducted by Berkeley police officers who deliberately drive homeless people out from makeshift shelters and into cold, rainy and wintry weather, with no concern for the harmful effects on their health, and without offering any alternative places where those forced to be outdoors all night could seek shelter.

Police rousts during cold and stormy weather should disturb the conscience of a liberal community, especially since the report carefully documents that these raids occurred during winter months when every shelter operating in Berkeley was filled to capacity and turning people away.

The report describes one police raid in a rainstorm that shows how heartless these practices can be. "On one of the rainiest nights of the fall season, several people were cited by police for trespassing after they sought shelter from a storm which by 5:30 a.m. had turned into a torrential downpour."

The police sweeps also raise important constitutional issues. The authors of the report declare: "The criminalization of homeless people for 'illegal sleeping' when in fact there is no legal place where a person without a home can sleep in Berkeley raises serious constitutional as well as human rights concerns."

Since sleep is a fundamental necessity for all human beings, the report argues, "it is unconstitutional as well as inhuman to criminalize a person for doing what that person must of necessity do by virtue of being a human being."

COMPLICITY OF CITY OFFICIALS

Another case exposes how ceaseless police harassment has made life miserable for one vulnerable homeless mother. The woman, who has a teenage son, spends her days making beautiful chalk drawings on the sidewalk in downtown Berkeley and panhandling. Efforts to find shelter for the mother and son "have foundered on the fact that there are very few shelters that will take a woman and a male child."

Berkeley officials are well aware of her predicament, and the hardships she faces in finding shelter. In fact, Berkeley Assistant City Manager Jim Hines held a meeting of homeless agencies at which everyone present said it would require the "concerted effort of multiple agencies" to find a housing solution for the woman.

Despite the direct knowledge of high-ranking city officials about the difficulties in resolving her plight, the Berkeley police have issued her over 12 tickets for sleeping on the sidewalk and having her belongings there — six in a single month. Their mean-spirited persecution flies in the face of the community's attempts to find shelter for her, and the repeated citations and fines place a very costly burden on a mother already impoverished.

When city officials know there are no shelter alternatives available, yet wash their hands of the matter and allow their police to criminalize a homeless mother, they are complicit in this persecution.

The report clearly reveals the extent of the direct complicity of Berkeley officials in this case of police harassment. At the meeting with the assistant city manager, lawyers from the Suitcase Clinic told Hines that, given the inability of the city to provide shelter, it was counterproductive for police to issue citations. "Nevertheless the police continue to cite her, despite the fact that the city is unable to offer any alternative to her present plight."

IMPROPER SEARCHES

The report by attorneys Steinbach and Neumann also documents that Berkeley police have conducted many improper searches of homeless people without their consent or probable cause. In one outrageous case of police misconduct cited in the report, Officer Mah admitted in an interview with the Police Review Commission that he "went down the line" of homeless youth sitting on the sidewalk on Telegraph Avenue and searched all of them.

Officer Mah didn't even pretend to have any reason to suspect illegal activity by any individual, but systematically forced all of them to submit, evidently believing their status as homeless youth gave him a license to illegally search them.

Suitcase Clinic attorneys brought the complaint of Corey Yates and Bradley Gore, two of the homeless youth searched by Mah, to the PRC. The PRC sustained the complaints against Mah for improper, non-consensual searches.

The Berkeley Police Department's own Training and Information Bulletin on the Rights of the Homeless states: "The homeless enjoy the same legal and individual rights afforded to others," and that police "shall at all times respect those rights."

Police harassment and improper searches of people just because they are homeless violate the BPD's own dictates, which warn officers that factors such as "dress, unusual or disheveled or impoverished appearance do not justify even a brief detention or a request for identification absent individualized suspicion of that person's specific criminal activity."

Nonetheless, accounts of police persecution of homeless people abound. In one instance of indefensible cruelty, Berkeley Police Officer Onciano approached a mother and her son on January 2, 2003. Even though the homeless mother was packing her belongings to leave, Onciano began yelling at her to hurry up, then "approached her son, who was still sleeping, and began kicking him repeatedly."

DISCRIMINATORY ENFORCEMENT

The report criticizes Berkeley police for enforcing laws in ways that illegally discriminate against homeless people. Despite the fact that there are no laws in Berkeley against sitting against a building or sitting on a stool or bucket on the sidewalk, police regularly harass, berate, fine and arrest homeless people for doing so.

Even though the city manager has directly instructed the police that no ordinance is to be applied against people sitting on objects on the sidewalk, several homeless vendors of *Street Spirit* have been harassed, cited and driven away by Berkeley police simply for sitting on a stool or bucket while selling the paper.

The inhumanity of this discriminatory enforcement comes through clearly in the following cases cited in the report:

"In March 2003, a 69-year-old African-American man with cirrhosis of the liver, was cited under this ordinance for sitting on a little stool in front of Picadilly Circus where he was a regular vendor of *Street Spirit*. In the same month, a 59-year-old African-American woman with sickle cell anemia, weak legs and frequent dizzy spells who vends *Street Spirit* in front of the Bank of America on Shattuck Avenue near Cedar, was told by two officers that she couldn't sit on an overturned bucket, but had to either stand or sit on the sidewalk. Just up the block, another *Street Spirit vendor*, a 56-year-old African-American woman who has epilepsy and walks with a cane because of an injury to her leg was told by the same officers to get off the bucket she was sitting on."

*Then, in May 2004, the same 69-year-*old man ticketed in front of Picadilly Circus was ticketed again for sitting on his stool in front of the Wells Fargo Bank on Solano Avenue. Many homeless people report that police repeatedly target certain homeless individuals and go out of their way to harass them wherever they go.

REFORMING THE POLICE

The report asks the Police Review Commission to take action by recommending a set of policy changes to the Berkeley Police Department (BPD).

Instead of criminalizing sleep, the police should have a list of available shelter beds, updated daily. If no shelter is available, police should not cite people for sleeping outdoors, but suggest places where they can sleep without being driven away, and issue a warning before giving citations.

The report recommends that police supervisors should tell all officers that harassment and discourtesy towards homeless people will not be tolerated in the BPD. To help change anti-homeless attitudes, the report calls for trainings for all officers on the causes of homelessness, the problems faced by those living on the streets, and their legal rights.

Homelessness has steadily escalated in Berkeley for the past two decades. The police department has been asked repeatedly during those 20 years to rein in officers who purposely set out to bully, intimidate and arrest homeless people simply for being a visible presence on city streets.

The shocking number of cases of police misconduct outlined in this report show that too many officers still act as though they had a license to abuse the poorest of the poor. That lack of respect for the most basic of human rights is unconscionable in any city in America, let alone in Berkeley, where people have worked for peace and justice in so many ways, for so many years, and with so much passion.

Subscribe to Street Spirit!

Street Spirit is published by the **American Friends Service Committee.** Homeless vendors receive 50 papers a day for free, and sell the paper as a positive alternative to panhandling. American Friends Service Committee shoulders the entire printing costs of more than $3,000.00 each month. Please **donate** or **subscribe** to *Street Spirit* ! Help us remain an independent voice for justice!

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Bush's Cuts Cause Crisis in Section 8 Housing Program

by Lynda Carson

The Bush Administration has shattered America's 30-year commitment to assist low-income families in keeping a roof over their head through the HUD-funded Section 8 housing voucher programs that assist the disabled, elderly and the poor.

In late April, Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) across the nation were informed that reimbursements from HUD for fiscal year 2004 would not be based on current voucher costs; instead, payments would be based on the cost of vouchers under lease on August 1, 2003, adjusted for inflation.

The announcement sent shock waves throughout the country when the PHAs discovered that the regulatory changes created huge budget shortfalls for fiscal year 2004, because they would only receive funding at the level of fiscal year 2003. This disaster comes on top of the Bush Administration's proposal to eliminate 250,000 housing vouchers in 2005.

These destructive changes went into effect when Bush signed the current budget into law in January 2004. On April 22, HUD issued guidelines spelling out details of the new budget. Public housing agencies across the nation have quickly fallen into a crisis due to the funding shortfalls. Many are being forced to terminate Section 8 vouchers already in use.

Housing activists across the nation are outraged and feel double-crossed by HUD for the recent changes because Congress fully funded the existing stock of housing vouchers for fiscal year 2004, and they believe that HUD has interpreted the will of Congress incorrectly.

THE CRISIS SPREADS

The crisis has already spread from *coast to coast. New York City faces a $55 million shortfall* in its efforts to fully fund 118,000 housing vouchers that are already in use for fiscal year 2004.

A housing agency in Warrenton, Oregon, had to cut off funding for 110 families in the first week of May 2004. The agency is presently short of $59,000 or more, and another 50 families could be cut from the voucher programs by June 1.

The Public Housing Authority of Alameda, California, sent out letters on May 14 to 1,659 families and over 600 landlords to inform them that the new HUD regulations created a $3 million shortfall and that there may not be any rent money for the month of June. Tenants and landlords are being advised to use the security deposits to pay the rent and to negotiate a way for the renters to repay the spent security deposits.

Massachusetts housing officials are set to mail termination notices to about 650 tenants due to a shortage of $550,000, and are working with state and federal officials to come up with a solution to avoid the termination of many other vouchers.

Minnesota is facing a voucher crisis and 2,000 families may lose their assistance by June. According to John Gutzmann, an executive of the St. Paul PHA, his agency alone faces a $30,000 shortfall or more.

The PHA of Fargo, North Dakota, has indicated that they may have to terminate the housing vouchers for 46 out of 1,100 families from their existing housing voucher programs.

Under the Bush Administration's budget proposals, estimates already have been calculated by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities for fiscal years 2005 through 2009, and it appears that the current disaster is only the tip of an iceberg.

The proposed reductions in voucher subsidies for fiscal year 2005 may result in a huge new outbreak of homelessness locally and across the nation for years ahead if the Bush administration's proposals are not reversed.



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

Public housing agencies across the country are being forced to terminate Section 8 vouchers. HUD cutbacks will lead to loss of housing for the poor, disabled and elderly.

MASSIVE CUTS IN CALIFORNIA

On a local level, during FY 2005, reductions to Berkeley's housing voucher programs may result in the elimination of 223 out of 1,841 families being served, unless the city imposes an annual rent increase of $1,545 spread across the board to each family using the existing housing vouchers.

In FY 2005, the City of Alameda faces a $2,310,687 funding shortfall for its vouchers, in addition to its current crisis, *and may have to eliminate 197 out of* 1,625 families from voucher programs or raise the rents for everyone on an annual basis by $1,392.

Oakland faces a cutback of $17,380,757 for FY 2005 under the current budget proposals, and may be forced to eliminate 1,303 out of 10,754 families from its voucher programs or raise the rents annually for all by as much as $1,582 per family.

San Francisco faces a reduction by as much as $15,257,319, and may have to eliminate 876 out of 7,229 families from its voucher programs or raise rents on all families by as much as $2,066 annually.

Richmond faces a shortfall of $2,388,667 in FY 2005, and may have to eliminate 212 out of 1,750 families from voucher programs or raise the rents annually by $1,336 per family.

Alameda County faces a shortfall of $8,711,214 and Contra Costa County faces a shortfall of $9,583,119 to fund voucher programs in fiscal year 2005.

Los Angeles faces a shortfall of $41,945,319 to fund their vouchers for FY 2005. The State of California in its entirety faces a total shortfall of $316,440,144 in FY 2005 to fully fund a total of 294,708 vouchers already in use in the state.

The numbers reveal a staggering amount of hardship to come for the poor, disabled and elderly in California unless the Bush Administration reverses its malevolent policies.

George W. Bush claimed to be a compassionate conservative. At this point, one can only wonder what in hell that really means as the warmonger of the White House brings us visions of torture, death and mass murder from across the seas and around the nation as a direct result of his despicable actions.

Across the nation, Congressional Democrats claim that thousands of poor families could either lose their housing, or be forced to pay more money out of their own pockets, causing severe economic hardship. According to House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, "The Bush administration is breaking a 30-year promise to help low-income families, the elderly and the disabled to afford decent, safe housing."

Democrats, housing activists, and advocacy groups argue that HUD is misinterpreting the budget and that voucher costs should be updated every three months so that the cost-of-living increases may be assessed on a continual basis.

OUTRAGE ACROSS THE NATION

The National Leased Housing Association stated, "NLHA has voiced its opposition to HUD's interpretation of the FY04 formula and along with other industry groups is pressing Congress to affirm its intention that all vouchers in use (and authorized) be funded at their current cost."

Ayinde, executive director of Jubilee West, a nonprofit housing organization in Oakland, could only describe recent events as a disaster. "Jubilee West has been in existence for 29 years, and presently we have 91 housing units filled with families using the Section 8 vouchers. We have faced one crisis after another through the years, and this latest one is certainly a disaster in the making. At least for now we have not received any notice from the Oakland Housing Authority about the latest funding shortfalls happening around the country.

"The Section 8 program has been taking hits for years, and the poor always end up paying more out of their pocket every year. The housing authority never comes around to see what our real needs are, and they're not really concerned about the low-income renters. Everyone is trying to get rid of the low-income renters. It's time for people to give up hope and to take action, because they cannot count on the politicians to have their best interests at heart. From the top down, it's obvious that the federal, state, and local governments only want to serve the well-to-do. With Bush, Schwarzenegger and Jerry Brown running things, we are all in deep trouble!"

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities said in a statement, "The Bush Administration's FY 2005 HUD budget proposal calls for deep cuts in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. The budget also would radically alter the fundamental design of the program by converting it to a block grant administered by Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) for the benefit of higher income households. The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force is strongly opposed to the Administration's budget proposal which would cut more than $1 billion from current funding levels. We are also strongly opposed to the Administration's ill-conceived proposal to convert the program to the Flexible Voucher Program — a block-grant type approach which would eliminate many of the critical protections people with disabilities have under the current Section 8 program."

Robert Barrer, assistant director of Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency (BOSS), said, "I can't imagine what all these people are going to do if they cut back on the voucher programs. This is all beyond depressing! We serve many clients on Section 8. Most of our other clients are trying to get on Section 8, and this latest crisis will set back the housing voucher programs for years to come!"

In response to the Bush Administration's budget cuts, Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) has introduced H.R. 4263 to resolve the problem; he already has 85 cosponsors supporting the bill. The bill would amend the FY04 VA-HUD Appropriations Act in order to fully fund Section 8 vouchers based upon the agency's per-unit cost, as originally intended by Congress.

Housing activists are calling on people to call their member of Congress at the Capital Switchboard (toll free number) to insist that cuts to housing vouchers are totally unacceptable. Call 1-888-818-6641 to reach your Congressional representative. Housing activists request that you:

1) Insist that HUD withdraw the April 22 notice changing the way housing vouchers are funded, because the change is leading to funding cuts across the country.

2) Insist that HUD fully fund all housing vouchers in 2004, as Congress intended.

3) Insist that vouchers be based on their actual cost according to the latest available data.

People's Park at 35

by Kevin McFarren

I dreamt again of days gone by.
Mornings in the Park,
Evenings on the Avenue
Panhandling, sharing,
Watching each other's backs.

One by one, they went away:
Police cars,
Ambulances,
Coroner's vans

And they never came back.

Sometimes I wonder
Am I the last one left?

Then I see a familiar face
From the old days
And I realize
We are not all gone yet.

I Cry

by Joanna Bragen

I cry for the cold
I cry for the dark
I cry for the people
Having broken my heart.

I cry for what could have been
I cry for the people who cannot win
I cry for the government
Committing sin.

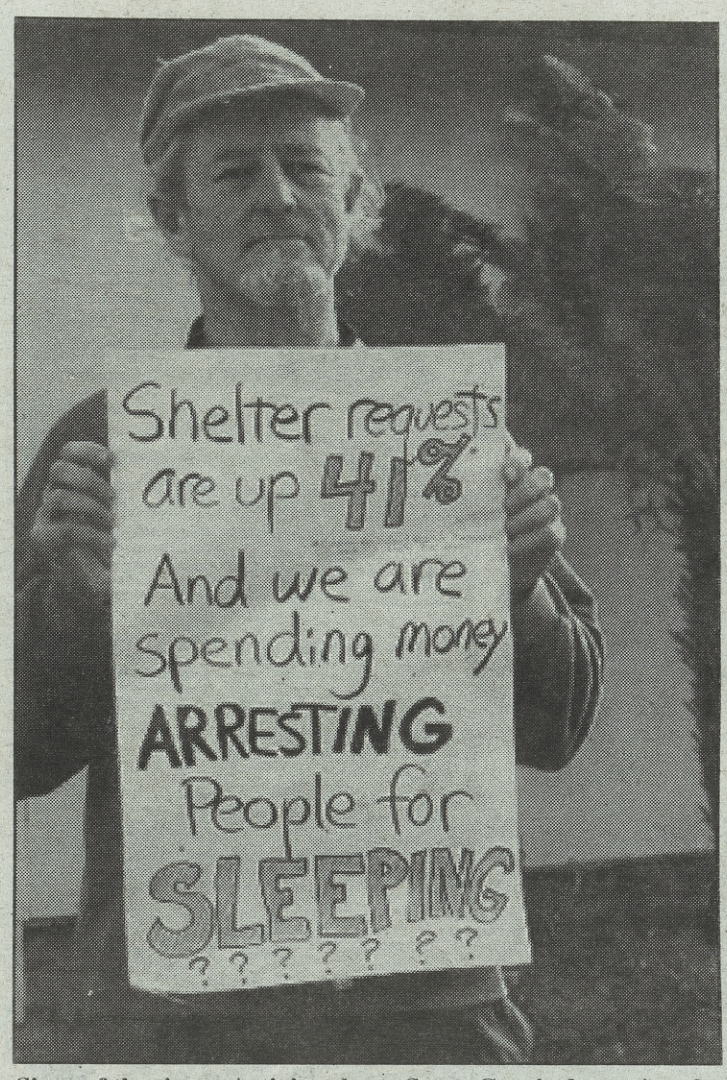
I cry for loneliness
I cry for my wanderlust
I cry for my lack of trust

I cry for the difficulty
I cry for the stone walls
I cry for a softer world
I cry for wanting it all

Liberal Mayor Breaks Promise to Santa Cruz Homeless

Liberal on foreign policy, yet reactionary on the rights of the poor at home, a Santa Cruz mayor breaks his public pledge to allow discussion of the Bring America Home Act.

by Becky Johnson



Signs of the times. Activists decry Santa Cruz's draconian sleeping ban, which criminalizes sleeping outside. Photos by Bradley

How liberal are the liberals on social justice issues? Well, it depends on how close to home they are. Mayor Scott Kennedy of Santa Cruz bills himself as a liberal. He is the cofounder of the Resource Center for Nonviolence. As a member of the Fellowship for Reconciliation, he advocates for the rights of Palestinians living halfway around the world, and he is a strong opponent of the war in Iraq.

As a member of the City Council, Kennedy voted to waive parade fees for gay pride parades, supported Free Radio Santa Cruz, and called for a new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal. But Kennedy also has both a recent and a long-standing history of ignoring and even endorsing daily abuses against homeless people, while muzzling homeless activists.

In 1994, Kennedy publicly supported the anti-homeless Downtown Ordinances which ratified selective police enforcement practices against "undesirables" by making a whole range of innocent behaviors criminal. Asking for money or food after dark, setting up a political table next to a building or playing music next to a wall — all were made criminal offenses. In a subsequent police riot where one woman miscarried and another man had his ribs broken, Kennedy justified the police violence.

In the years since, Kennedy has allied with developers, merchants, and the powerful Seaside Company. He supported a youth curfew, critically weakened and then killed the Citizens Police Review Board, and backed banning the parking of vehicles from midnight to 6 a.m. without "a permit," a measure aimed at homeless vehicle dwellers.

In 2003, Kennedy supported a harsh stiffening of the Downtown Ordinances which directly criminalized sitting on 95 percent of city sidewalks, banned street performing with a donation can on 80 percent of the sidewalks, and added the uniquely repressive and unconstitutional "Move Along Every Hour" law. Superior Court Judge Michael Barton ruled in court on March 19 that the move-along law is unconstitutional because it discriminates against non-commercial speech. [See "Victory for Free Speech in Santa Cruz," *Street Spirit*, April 2004.]

HARASSMENT OF ACTIVISTS

In January 2004, Kennedy interrupted repeatedly and personally ordered the arrest of Robert Norse (one of the writers of this article). Angered at a peaceful silent protest at City Council in response to his exclusion of Sleeping Ban reform from the agenda, Kennedy repeatedly threatened with ejection a score of critics silently holding signs.

In April 2004, Kennedy pushed many closer to homelessness by moving to end rent control at Clear View Court, the only remaining rent-controlled trailer park in Santa Cruz. At the same time, he backed spending $15 million in public funds to subsidize a multimillion-dollar hotel across the street from the trailer park.

Most recently, the shallowness of Kennedy's convictions about social justice issues in his own backyard was exposed when Human Rights Organization co-founder Bob Patton spoke at the City Council meeting on April 13. Patton presented the Bringing America Home Act to the council and community in the brief period the Brown Act allows for public comment.

BRINGING AMERICA HOME ACT

The Bringing America Home Act (H.R. 2897) currently being discussed in Washington, D.C., is meant to address homelessness at the national level. It was introduced in the 108th Congress by Rep. Julia Carson (D-IN) and John Conyers (D-MI) in July 2003. The bill is designed to end homelessness in the United States and includes housing, health, income and civil rights components. It is backed by the National Coalition on Homelessness in Washington, D.C., as well as the U.S. Conference of Mayors, NAACP, National Organization for Women, the United Farm Workers, and the SEIU union.

Seconds after Patton made his presentation to the City Council, Kennedy called him back to the speaker's microphone. The mayor told the startled activist, the packed chamber, and the hundreds watching on cable television, that the Bringing America Home Act would be an agenda item at the next regular meeting on April 27, 2004. In response, Patton's Human Rights Organization and HUFF (Homeless United for Friendship & Freedom) scheduled a press conference and invited speakers to further the public discussion.

Patton then secured Bob Erlenbusch, executive director of the Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger & Homelessness and chairperson for The Bringing Home America Campaign, to speak to the council on April 27 and lead the press conference preceding it. Other activists arranged for food to be provided and put out press releases. Invited to the event were local service providers and homeless people recently thrown onto the streets by the closing of the winter Armory shelter.

In Santa Cruz, during eight months of the year, there is sleeping space for fewer than 40 people out of an estimated homeless population of 1500-2000.

"I felt pretty positive that the mayor would stand by his word," Patton said, "since he had said it in such a public way and with such a definite tone of voice." Some activists weren't so sure and urged Patton to have a special meeting with the mayor to hammer out the details.

MAYOR'S PROMISE UNRAVELS

On Thursday, April 22, Bob Patton met with Mayor Scott Kennedy in his office to nail down details of the upcoming council session. In an e-mail describing the outcome of that meeting, Patton noted, "The main reason for this meeting with Scott was to ask for an additional two minutes of time for an outside speaker to address the issue when it came up." Public comment time is only three minutes, and guest speaker Erlenbusch was traveling over 500 miles to speak on a complex topic.

The first thing Patton learned was that, in spite of Kennedy's earlier public commitment, the Bringing America Home Act would not be on the City Council agenda. Patton pressed Kennedy for an explanation. The mayor explained that he could possibly add it to the agenda since the mayor sets the agenda, but he would have to add equal time for dissenters or make public note of dissension within the council members. Patton readily agreed, but then described what happened next.

"When he sensed I was ready to accept that, he then backpedaled again," Patton said. "He claimed that other council members he shared information with and took counsel from had strong reservations as to addressing this issue. As our meeting progressed, he further hardened his stance to say that he would not go against the will of those on the council who oppose having the bill addressed."

What was wrong with a bill that would bring additional federal resources to local authorities to address pressing homeless issues in Santa Cruz? Kennedy prides himself on his "compassionate concern" for homeless people. Could it be the controversial "civil rights" section of the bill that denies funding for cities with anti-homeless laws on the books?

SANTA CRUZ SLEEPING BAN

Patton acknowledged that local laws — including the Sleeping Ban and Kennedy's Downtown Ordinances — which primarily affect homeless people will have to be reviewed, revised or even repealed. The Sleeping Ban makes it illegal to sleep at night between 11 p.m. and 8:30 a.m. anywhere outdoors or in a vehicle. With only 40 spaces in its emergency shelter and 1500 to 2000 homeless people in the city limits on any given night, a law against sleep is especially inhumane.

The Downtown Ordinances were largely prompted by merchant gentrification demands and police department pressure to ratify their ongoing campaign of harassing, demanding IDs, and ticketing *"the unsavory."*

According to Kennedy, Patton reported, City Council members did not want to put anything on the agenda that would "bring opportunity to those who would confront and embarrass them around the city's camping and sleeping bans."

Concluded Patton, "The carrot was dangled, but the prize was unavailable." Less than five days before the scheduled council meeting, Kennedy broke his word. He didn't even directly inform Patton, who only learned of the change because he scheduled a meeting with Kennedy.

STILL A CRIME TO BE HOMELESS

Bob Erlenbusch said he was disappointed but not surprised. Local activists recalled how quickly politicians' enthusiasm for human rights protection evaporates as the target population gets closer to home. A decade-old request to the local American Civil Liberties Union for a simple statement of opposition to the anti-homeless Sleeping Ban still sits in an ACLU subcommittee.

Kennedy and his City Council have declared Santa Cruz to be "a sister city" in solidarity with impoverished communities in Nicaragua, Russia, and Japan. They have declared their opposition to "Patriot Act" violations by the federal government. But they see no contradiction in keeping their own poor citizens silent, powerless, oppressed and hidden.

How liberal are the liberals of Santa Cruz? Liberal enough when posturing to the national media on Iraq, dispensing medical marijuana at City Hall, or investigating Bush for impeachable offenses. Rigidly and solidly reactionary when dealing with survival needs and the human rights of the "houseless," those who have been driven to live on the streets, in the bushes, and in vehicles by the skyhigh rents and grim Republicratic economy.

Robert Norse contributed to this article.

Mandatory Fingerprinting Violates Right to Privacy

by chance martin

At present, everyone must give up a biometric thumbprint and a digital photo that's stored in a centralized database to get a shelter bed in San Francisco. Homeless people are now treated the same way the new US VISIT program stores foreign visitors' fingerprints and photos to somehow ferret out terrorists.

California already requires everyone with a driver's license or state ID, welfare recipients and prison inmates to provide digital scans of their digits; but what is probably the most significant feature of San Francisco's new CHANGES Homeless Management Information System (besides managing homeless people) is tracking and reimbursing costs for homeless services.

San Francisco is implementing the Coordinated Homeless Assessment of Needs and Guidance through Effective Services (CHANGES) program in order to comply with HUD's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) mandate. CHANGES hasn't yet shown much promise at providing better-coordinated homeless services, let alone at delivering the loaves-and-fishes miracle of sheltering 10-15,000 homeless people with fewer than 2500 shelter beds citywide.

CHANGES manages city-funded homeless services by tracking shelter residents and their confidential records as they cycle through programs and facilities in city-managed and city-contracted homeless services. Every live body that can be instantly verified via CHANGES represents someone, somewhere, getting reimbursed for something.

The Coalition on Homelessness researched other localities competing for HUD homeless assistance dollars that have already implemented their federally mandated Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) to comply with the 2004 deadline. We also requested public records regarding the development and implementation of CHANGES, and surveyed people impacted by this policy.

Our findings raise serious concerns.

CHANGES requires every homeless person seeking city-funded services in San Francisco to give up their first name, last name, date of birth and mother's maiden name. While these can easily provide enough variables to derive an identifier for HMIS records, homeless people seeking city services in high-tech San Francisco must also give up a digital photo and a biometric fingerprint.

With CHANGES, the shelter resident's biometric finger image becomes his or her unique identifier. The thumb scan can be compared to her or his photo, episode history, history at other shelters, and all past case management and referral records. The identifier can also call up denials of services at other city-funded providers, raising concerns of CHANGES potential use as a gatekeeper, as well as the person's welfare records. A thumbscan is also required for users to log into CHANGES.

The City of San Francisco spent over three-quarters of a million dollars (a HUD grant that would probably be better used funding actual homeless services) by last December to enroll fewer than 2000 shelter clients into CHANGES. Some city sources predict the final implementation costs will exceed $1.1 million.

The best cost ratio our research uncovered for a federal compliance-ready Homeless Management Information System was that covering the entire state of Georgia, identifying 200,000 unique recipients of homeless services for an annual tab of $600,000. Even the uniquely encumbered municipal bureaucracy of Washington, D.C., squeezed out $135,000 start-up costs to enroll 20,000 homeless clients, and their HMIS program's yearly upkeep totaled a mere $98,000.



"Tears" Art by Eric Drooker [See www.Drooker.com}

Most homeless people surveyed told us they opposed CHANGES, saying it violates their privacy rights, endangers their confidentiality, and humiliates them by treating them as criminals. Many now avoid city shelters altogether.

Management of CHANGES implementation so far has been far from ideal.

Enrollees' confidentiality is compromised routinely, due to snafus with equipment or administration. For example, CHANGES' contractor failed to redact client's identifying information in "bug reports" the Coalition received through public records requests, leaving us questioning what confidentiality protocol the contractor practices.

On the implementation's other end, some anecdotal accounts also indicate that less-than-spotless homeless thumbs often won't scan reliably. Factor most shelters' management-heavy petit bureaucracy into the equation, and CHANGES makes the procedure of entering city-funded homeless shelters even more invasive, inhumane and unreliable than San Francisco's former practice of conducting a daily lottery that homeless people were forced to play for scarce shelter space.

Then there are homeless people with psychiatric labels and symptoms (including lots of military veterans), immigrants with or without cloudy "legal" status, and women and children fleeing domestic violence who avoid such a system for often valid and foreseeable reasons.

Most homeless people we've surveyed oppose all these new "enhancements" to San Francisco's homeless programs because, in reality, they don't benefit a single homeless person. Many are now avoiding city shelters altogether because they don't want that thumbprint and digital image recorded for intake and scanned every time they return to the shelter.

In all, 73 percent of 201 shelter users we surveyed told us they opposed CHANGES, saying it violates their privacy rights, endangers their confidentiality, and humiliates them by treating them as criminals. Thirty percent said they'd rather stay outside — at constant risk of citations and arrests — than submit to biometric identification. This number increases to 44 percent among homeless Latinos fearing CHANGES' potential for identifying undocumented immigrants.

One odd finding was that almost half of the 27 percent of shelter residents who do support CHANGES told us they believed it would make shelters safer by identifying criminals — even though the San Francisco Department of Human Services has repeatedly denied CHANGES can be used for this purpose.

When you consider that the only place a homeless person can legally exist outside police custody is in a homeless shelter, biometric imaging may seem a small price to pay for a free place to sleep. But even that won't be free anymore, as our shelter system is now geared to prioritize placing single adult recipients of the county's welfare programs over homeless low-wage workers, homeless seniors, and homeless disability recipients.

The implementation of Care Not Cash means that the Department of Human Services (DHS) will now deduct the welfare checks of homeless participants in the County Adult Assistance Program (CAAP) and Personal Assisted Employment Services (PAES) to reimburse the City for "food and utilities" while they're staying in the shelter. Starting on May 3, CAAP recipients will have about $150 deducted from their $332 monthly welfare payments, while PAES participants will take a monthly hit of about $239 from their $410 workfare stipend.

That works out to 46 percent or 58 percent deductions for presumably the same amount of food and utility usage. And DHS just overturned a court decision preventing them from deducting a full 85 percent of these county welfare recipients' checks as "rent" for a bed in an emergency shelter. By doing this, they expect to recoup about $10 million of the $104 million or so the City typically spends yearly on direct homeless services.

But this isn't a typical budget year. The City of San Francisco is bracing for a budget shortfall of up to $350 million this coming fiscal year; and many of the hard choices and cuts made will impact programs serving poor and homeless people. Meanwhile, CHANGES has done nothing to directly benefit any of San Francisco's 10-15,000 homeless residents.

In a budget season marked by diminishing resources, the Coalition on Homelessness feels the money spent on ongoing research and development for CHANGES would be better used to help bolster San Francisco's embattled homeless programs. With your help, we can end this systemic abuse of homeless peoples' privacy and dignity.

If you want to get involved, please contact us at (415) 346-3740, or e-mail us at coh@sf-homeless-coalition.org.

chance martin is the project coordinator of STREET SHEET, a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness, 468 Turk Street, San Francisco, CA 94102. Phone: (415) 346-3740.

Fifty-One Fifty Fiction

by Jack Bragen

The gray-haired man wore gray slacks to match the gray, two-day stubble on his face. His white shirt had a brown coffee stain and his shoes were also brown.

The fax machine was ready. The photocopier whined, ready. The computer and printer were cranking. The day's work was beginning. All this crowded into the tiny studio apartment, barely allowing for a small bed and a chair.

A loud rapping shook the door. The gray man made his way to the door and was about to look through the peephole. The door flew open. There were three burly men and a woman holding a syringe, ready. The first man's nose received the end of a crutch. The second man's adam's apple received the other end. However, eventually, the gray man was pinned down and shot in the ass with a strong tranquilizer.

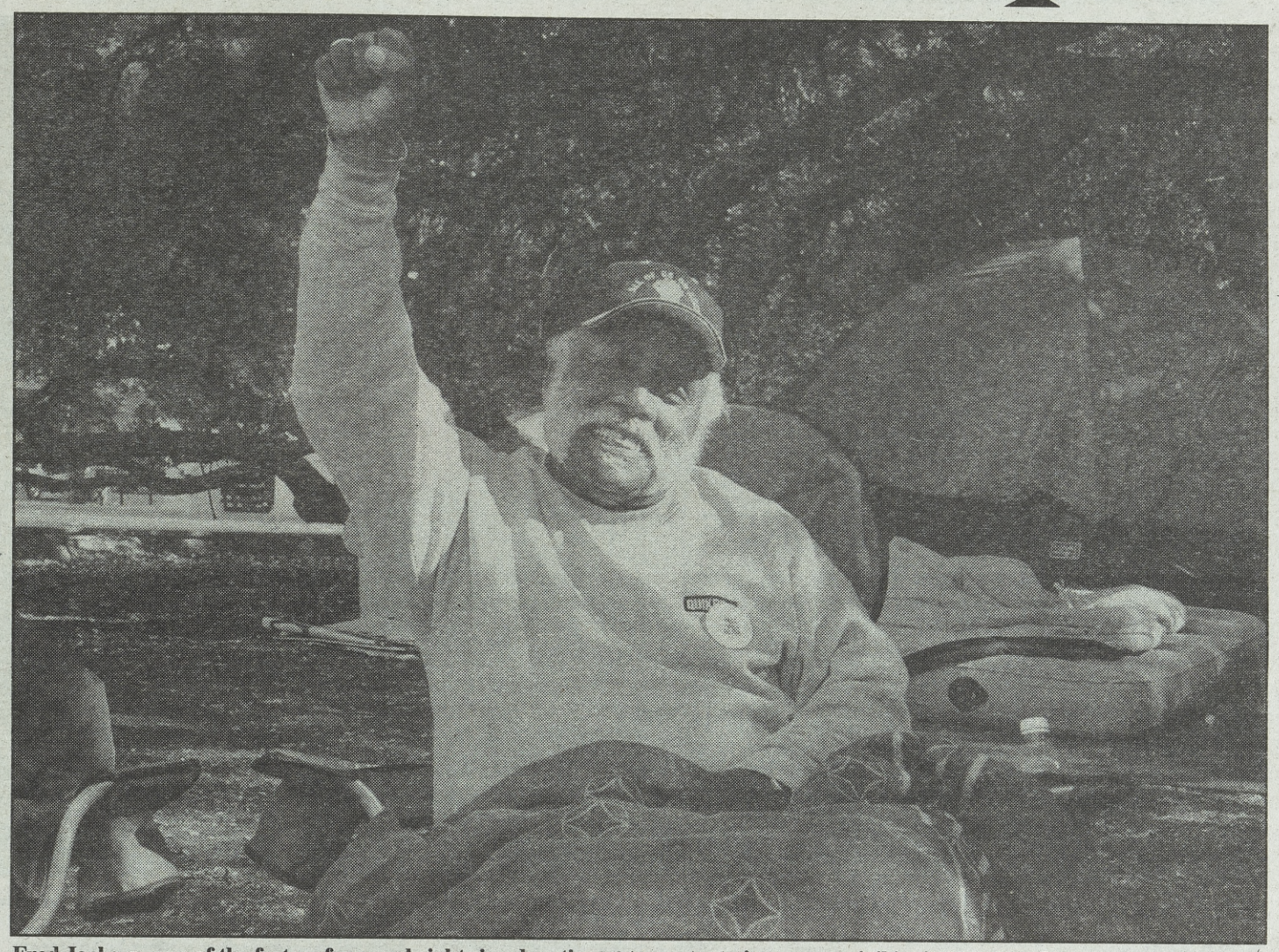
As the man was being removed, he was informed that he was insane and had delusions of being a businessman, and that the County officials were unhappy with his activities.

Electroshock Treatments In California Today
June 27, Sunday, 2-4 p.m.
Berkeley Main Library, 3rd floor
Shattuck Ave. & Kittredge St.
Downtown Berkeley

Free Summer Seminar: A look at electroshock treatments, past and present, and their reappearance today in California.
Panelists include: Lee Coleman, M.D., Berkeley psychiatrist, author of *The Reign of Error*; Ted Chabasinski, J.D., organizer of the campaign to ban electroshock in Berkeley; and Howard Shryock, Bay Area political activist.

Still Separate, Still Unequal

Although the 1964 Civil Rights Act declared that education is a civil right, California ranks 40th in education spending and 1st in prison spending.



Fred Jackson, one of the fasters for equal rights in education, set up a tent-city protest vigil in Oakland. Photo: march4education.org

by Tiny, *PoorNewsNetwork*

"Arnold (Schwarzenegger) couldn't take any time out of his busy schedule to meet with any of the students, elders or children, even though he already knew that we were coming many months ahead of time; that's one of the reasons we are fasting," said Julia Ibarra. The morning sun jumped in and out of sight behind a huge tree which shaded several large tents in the background as I stood with one of the dedicated young scholaz, 17-year-old Berkeley High School student Ibarra, at Oakland City Hall's Frank Ogawa Plaza.

Ms. Ibarra continued to detail the roots of the struggle that led to the water-only fasting of one mother, two teachers, two students, and two community members at the City Hall and State buildings in Oakland. "Before the fast," she said, "we walked 70 miles over 7 days to meet with the governor to talk about the serious crisis that faces education and the platform we are demanding: Equity in education, fully fund Proposition 98, and eliminate the West Contra Costa County debt."

On this, the 50th anniversary of Brown vs. the Board of Education, the state of education in California is not so much about segregation as it is about institutional racism and classism. If you are in the right neighborhood with the right tax base (i.e., middle and upper income folks paying property taxes), your experience in the public schools is not so bad. You probably have books, maybe an art or science program, and some form of physical education classes; but for the rest of us, especially those of us in areas populated by low-income families, education in California is Still Separate, Still Unequal.

And although the 1964 Civil Rights Act declared that education is a civil and human right, in the year 2004, the state of California ranks 40th in education spending and 1st in prison spending.

"Schools in Richmond don't have a soccer club, they have an asthma club, because of the close proximity to Chevron; and that's how it is in the Bayview, West Oakland and a lot of poor communities of color across the nation," said teacher, poet and activist Cesar Cruz.

Cruz, one of the organizers and participants in the fast, described the flagrant disparities in education and why they needed to do this fast. "Poor communities have different realities, 'cause they dump everything on the poor."

"Go to Sacramento, keep fighting and don't let them stop you," Dolores Huerta told the fasters. On Day 7 of the fast, the amazing civil rights warrior Dolores Huerta, in the tradition of the United Farm Workers' fasts for civil rights, joined the fasters in solidarity, encouraging them to migrate to Sacramento and camp out in front of Gov. Schwarzenegger's office until he responds to their demands.

In so doing, Huerta squelched the efforts by (not) strong Mayor Jerry Brown and his Oakland Police Department troops to give the fasters trouble in the first few days of their fast. The mayor ended up proclaiming Monday, May 17, Equal Education Day in honor of the fasters.

As the sounds of hip hop scholarship filled the morning air, Cruz spoke the words of resistance that summed up this crucial fight: "We're migrating the fight up California. We'll be at Richmond High School tonight, and then off to Sacramento, 'cause poor children fight these conditions every day. Us fasting for eight days is nothing, so we're gonna go on 'til we see changes — as long as it takes."

For more on this struggle go to www.march4education.org. For journalism on issues of poverty and racism from the youth, adults and elders who experience it every day go to www.poormagazine.org

POOR Magazine

is holding a

Spoken Word Rent Rescue Marathon

June 13 at 4:00 pm

at POOR's new office

1095 Market St #307

7th & Market, San Francisco

All are invited

Transportation Justice for the Poor

by Bob Mills

East Bay activists have begun to sound the call for a better, more efficient means of public transportation. Public transportation is more than an environmental issue. It is a crucial issue for low-income people who are unable to afford owning a vehicle.

As critical as housing and health care, public transportation is needed to get to social services and doctor's appointments, and to take the children to school and go to work. You are paralyzed if you do not have access to some means of transportation, especially in the Bay Area.

Recently a coalition of homeless advocates, social justice, environmental health, youth and transportation organizations committed to transportation have challenged the decision-making body of the entire Bay Area transit authority, the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC).

MTC boasts about their transportation outreach. They have six focus groups, 26 targeted workshops and a telephone poll. For a public agency, this appears to be a good thing, as a critical part of good community planning. However, equally critical is how this input is used and incorporated into the planning.

The MTC seems to have gone through a token outreach approach after already making up its mind. They conducted the outreach to fulfill legal requirements, but

The MTC had no intention of listening to the poor, the elderly, disabled and other low-income commuters.

had no intention of listening to the poor, the elderly, disabled and other low-income commuters. These outreach efforts pointed to some very specific recommendations which affect the poor. Oddly, MTC is going ahead with their own recommendations, while only paying lip service to the outreach plan.

The Transportation Working Group has been meeting with MTC for the last year and confronted it in a demonstration at the end of 2003. We presented them with an alternative funding option, which better reflected social justice and equity.

This option included the following conclusions: After ascertaining that a social imbalance in resource allocation exists and that the MTC is discriminating against low-income communities and people of color, the proposed MTC spending options for the lifeline Transportation Program are extremely insufficient and unacceptable.

MTC must be held accountable for their planning process, and their funding must be consistent with the recommendations from their outreach efforts. The inherent, masked racism of denying a mechanism for people of color to be a part of the decision-making process must cease.

What it all boils down to is that homeless people, communities of color, low-income families, the disabled and the elderly currently do not have a real voice in the decision-making process of the MTC, their main means of transportation. The MTC is publicly funded by taxpayer dollars, and is mandated by social justice and federal law, and must be held accountable. We can change these inequities, as the MTC is still working on their 30-year plan and review every couple years.

Bob Mills is a staff organizer with the BOSS Community Organizing Team.

Oasis or Garbage Dump

by Claire J. Baker

Mayor of San Francisco
somewhere between
a comfortable mecca
for the homeless and a
garbage dump of inhumanity

there must be… oases —
sheltering that extends beyond walls
bonfires of consideration
where the disadvantaged gather

for warmth, conversation,
treatment, healthy food
for ablutions/solutions
a shower that isn't rain
fresh socks, bandaids

resources that don't leave
the downtrodden of your city
further down.

To Whom It May Concern

by Claire J. Baker

Here's a rune:
try jumping rope
to this little tune:
After all is said
and done. After war
is over, no one's won…

A minor poet rests her case:
Why go to war in the first
or last place?

Berkeley's Innovative Multi Agency Service Center



Dennis Powell, an artist and client, contributes his artwork to the community at MASC.



Volunteers massage homeless people at MASC. Photos by Lydia Gans

by Mary Rudge

THE CITY WAKES UP

In the early morning, people living on the streets of Berkeley or in shelters pull shabby covers from their faces and rise up to their own world of day-by-day survival, a culture within a culture. In Berkeley, as in many cities, a subterranean city exists, an underground subculture. Its population is seen on the *streets as the homeless and unemployed.*

They wake to their day, hoisting super-sized backpacks containing their belongings onto their shoulders again. They pull rolling suitcases with a sleeping bag strapped on, with perhaps even more black plastic garbage bags tied on, holding every bit of clothing and paper and personal treasure they own.

If they know it exists, they arrive in a long line at a place called MASC, the Multi Agency Service Center, that will help them live another day and perhaps even find a future. MASC, located in the Veterans Building at 1931 Center Street in Berkeley, is one of the interconnected facilities created by BOSS (Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency).

MASC offers a caring partnership with homeless persons and provides daytime services for the homeless men and women of Berkeley and surrounding communities. The people who use MASC have determined for themselves that they will create there a violence-free environment which encourages self-responsibility and self-growth. MASC is one component of several interconnected facilities created by BOSS in Berkeley and Oakland.

One enters the MASC facility, located in the Veterans Building, by going through a garden entrance which has artistically crafted tables with mosaic tile game boards built in, where people rest and meditate outdoors; then one goes down into the building's basement.

LEGENDS IN OUR OWN TIME

When the urban legend is written, those who work at MASC and those who participate in its programs may be described as a subculture whose life is, in many ways, apart from the larger society which has created it — a city within a city. The writer's literary vision can see archetypes in legends and stories of all times and cultures, and how they reappear today, not only in people who create national and international groups and events, but in the community around us.

DEDICATION AND IDEALS

For example, in the story of Camelot, itinerant, unemployed knights wandered through the forest to find their causes and someone to serve. They followed the great ideal that they should do good works. They gathered at a table whose roundness made each co-equal and meant that no one's place at the table was higher or lower, though each might have a separate quest.

Among the knights were those on a personal spiritual journey, such as Galahad, whose strength was as the strength of ten because his heart was pure, and Parsifal, whose journey was a search for the holy grail and all it symbolized. Some knights aided those in distress, helping them overcome their dragons and changing their destiny for the better.

In the connection I see between today's homelessness and universal or archetypal legends, a story from Holland also comes to mind of a small person who alone saw a leak in the dike by which the country could be flooded and the people drowned. This child was found by the townspeople in the morning, his finger still in the small hole through which water could have come to overwhelm the land and people.

I wondered if self-sacrifice and dedication today could block the overwhelming flood of hundreds of thousands in the crisis of being homeless, jobless, mentally ill, with serious health problems and no care, flooding the Bay Area and beyond, the numbers constantly rising.

In cities such as Berkeley, when a person needs or wants to change, it is important for each to learn who helps, when, where and even why. The poet Maya Angelou wrote: "Nobody but nobody can make it out there alone...."

Who is going to help someone make it out of their condition, if they come to MASC? There are some problems, mental or physical, for which there are no known cures. Someone must try. Each staff worker at MASC has a fascinating story of their trials, as do those using MASC services.

At MASC you will probably first meet Godwin, one of the core staff members, at the sign-in and information table. For Godwin, goodness can be in plastic cups, for "so much as you give a drink of cold water unto the poor," it is a spiritual act. And so is giving hot coffee with cream and sugar, or food, or words of comfort, or practical information. Godwin dispenses the helpful guidance a street person might need to start or continue their life-changing process through the intricate network of help and self-help.

GODWIN'S STORY

In his soft accent and melodious voice, Godwin tells his story.

"Eight years ago I was working in a warehouse," he begins, "when a friend asked, 'Would you like to work doing something with people?' I said I did want to make a difference in people's lives. He took me to Harrison House Shelter on 4th and introduced me to a supervisor. I worked there every week one or two days each week, then I was offered a different job with the Oakland Homeless Project, a residential program for clients with mental issues. I gained so much experience. These were BOSS projects, too.

"Then I came to MASC. Here, so many programs come together. I find it takes many complementary programs to help people be the best they can be. We are open seven days a week. I'm here Monday through Friday.

"I'm the person who comes early in the morning and gets things ready, gets the coffee going. During the day, I know people will ask me for all sorts of things. I find information for people. When people have questions about finding help for their needs, I listen and try to find answers.

"Here we average 140 people a day. A majority are the same people every day, some with addiction, some with joblessness, some with depression. Some are so tired or disoriented. Some work at night and have no place else where they can go during the day. Most don't have homes.

"Berkeley Food and Housing Project maintains 50 shelter beds for men here at night. If people sleep here, they can also receive help from groups, or participate in programs during the day. Others drop in, socialize with friends, find out about housing and get job tips."

What helps people learn and grow and change from the first day they walk in? "I think it is the combination of services," Godwin says.

MASC services include a clothing program, free hygiene supplies, showers, soap and towels, bathrooms, telephones, coffee, snacks and the use of a microwave. Blankets and raingear are obtainable.

MASC provides intensive services, on-site referrals, medication support services, drug and alcohol counseling, housing advocacy, advocacy for shelter and care, Section 8 assistance, financial benefits, representative payee services, medical services, crisis intervention, support groups, mental health referrals, and help obtaining birth certificates.

Volunteers at MASC offer free neck and back massages. Group discussions, and watching sports and movies together, help build community and mutual support

"Even with all this, recovery takes time," Godwin says. "To work their way into permanent housing, that takes years."

There does not seem to be a way around this housing problem, but there are ways to gain in a personal way, to gain inner strength and insight.

However, Godwin says, "At first people may not even seek alternatives. After working in social work for years I have seen the same people many times, making no change except for the worse; the body is damaged, brain damaged. If on drugs, they are like being stuck in a time tunnel. Some people stay in this warp 25 years or more. In matters of health and mental health, people need someone who knows how to help. Support at the right time is crucial. These people who help are here, or we know how to help find them. The important thing is we know the services, what effect they can have.

"The MASC staff can tell people where shelters are, where food is available. We know to refer people to a shelter availability hotline, Eden I and R, at (510) 537-2552, if they need to get into a shelter. We know to direct a teenager to the Chaplaincy for the Homeless, at 2345 Channing Way, Berkeley, (510) 548-0551, run by a totally different agency. And for women and women with children leaving abusive situations, A Safe Place, (510) 536-7233, or Tri-Valley Haven for Women (925) 449-5842, and others — we keep updated lists."

Godwin hands me lists so that I can see the references, and check the telephone numbers and addresses he has given me. I recognize some of these lists are like those I have picked up at the West Berkeley Branch Library on University Avenue near San Pablo, lists I have begun

See **Berkeley's Innovative MASC** *page 14*

Providing LifeLong Health Care to the Poor and Uninsured



The West Berkeley Family Practice offers health care to a very diverse community.



Betty Pickering, age 72, has chronic health problems which acupuncture treatments help keep under control. Jane Wineapple performs acupuncture on points in the ear.

by Lydia Gans

James is young man struggling to overcome drug addiction; he needs help getting his life back in order. Maria is expecting her first child; her pregnancy needs to be monitored.

Charles has high blood pressure, diabetes and other chronic conditions that require ongoing treatment. John has been disabled by a stroke and has to be housed in a board-and-care facility. Rashida needs dental care, Bidu's children need immunizations, and Susan has a family history of cancer and should have regular checkups.

The list goes on and on of low-income people with medical issues that need attention. But they are uninsured, or marginally covered by Medi-Cal and too poor to get the help they need.

In the East Bay, some help is out there, but it's excruciatingly hard to find. There are public and private agencies scattered around providing various services; but for a person already stressed by illness, navigating a Byzantine medical establishment is a formidable task.

It's no secret that what often happens is that the health problems are left unattended until they are so severe that the sick person ends up in the hospital emergency room. Here they can't be refused treatment, though they may have to wait for many hours. Along with the cost in pain and suffering to the patient, the cumulative cost to society is enormous.

Politicians talk about the deficiencies in the health care system a lot, but aside from funding a special project here and there, the government does nothing. Meanwhile, the quality of health care is deteriorating and is increasingly inaccessible to people who can't afford to pay.

It can be a matter of life and death to find a health care provider that offers decent care and services for the working poor, the homeless and uninsured, an organization focused on people, not profits.

In the East Bay, LifeLong Medical Care manages to provide practically every kind of essential care for the mental and physical health of a largely underserved population.

Katherine Zigmont, LifeLong's executive administrative assistant, says, "LifeLong Medical Care is a group of five community clinics. It's actually the Alameda County health safety net."

The basic principles of LifeLong are twofold. First, it provides a complete range of health care services for the whole family, everything from prenatal to geriatrics. Executive Director Marty Lynch describes this as "what you might call appropriate care, the right package of care for people who have complex health problems. That would include the elderly, people who are homeless, people with HIV and AIDS, difficult problems where you can't just provide straight medical care but need a range of services for the health care to work."

Second, LifeLong provides care primarily, though not exclusively, to people who are unserved or underserved by the general medical establishment, people without insurance or low-income people with Medi-Cal or MediCare. In fact, LifeLong serves most of the Medi-Cal and uninsured clients in Berkeley.

One of LifeLong's flyers points up the striking disparities in health conditions in Alameda County. "People living in the Berkeley Hills live an average of 20 years longer than those living in South and West Berkeley. African-American women in Berkeley are four times more likely to have a low birthweight baby than white women."

LifeLong Medical Care operates clinics at five sites, each with a different history and focus. The Over 60 Clinic, which, as its name implies, serves seniors, is where it all started. It was founded almost 30 years ago by the Gray Panthers.

A team of geriatric specialists helps with health problems specific to the elderly and works to enhance the quality of life of people suffering with chronic conditions. Support is also provided for their caregivers. The Over 60 Clinic is conveniently located on the ground floor of an apartment building housing low-income seniors. The old Over 60 Clinic building is now occupied by LifeLong's dental clinic, which offers a wide range of dental services.

The West Berkeley Family Practice clinic is housed in a fine historic building that looks like it might once have been an exclusive club. The still elegant-looking, comfortably furnished, wood-paneled waiting room is a pleasant contrast to the usual cold waiting rooms with their sickly green walls and plastic plants. Part of the room is sectioned off and filled with bright, colorful play equipment for children. This is probably the most active of LifeLong's clinics.

Clinic Director Yolanda Gamble estimates that each month they see about 1800 patients from many different backgrounds and ethnicities. She is enthusiastic about the place and the people. "It's such a wonderful place to work. It's a beautiful building, a wonderful neighborhood, all kinds of interesting neighbors and places. We have a very wonderful population of patients."

The clinic provides every kind of health service one would expect in a family practice — treatment, testing, counseling, prevention, education — for all members of the family.

LifeLong's East Oakland Health Center is located in Foothill Square, a mall that has seen better days. Murals that were once bright and colorful are now faded, but LifeLong's building is new and welcoming. The clinic serves primarily adults and is seeing a great increase in its patient load since the closure of two Alameda County community health clinics last year due to budget cutbacks.

East Oakland also has a new Adult Day Health Care program where people who would otherwise be homebound can spend the day, and not only get health care but also meet other people and participate in planned activities.

The Berkeley Primary Care clinic is housed in the Herrick campus of Alta Bates Hospital and provides a vast array of health services, including primary medical care, well and sick exams, STD treatment, HIV/AIDS testing and treatment.

A longtime patient commented, "They take care of every part of the body and mind. They even have a foot doctor and a chiropractor and a dietician to teach you about nutrition." After providing primary care, if needed, "we refer people for specialized care," Clinic Director Jane Selby explains. "We make the referrals for them."

Jill Dunner recalls when she was homeless and uninsured. "I was on the street with this heart condition and I needed emotional support as well as the physical. They worked together with my heart doctor and facilitated my going to Alta Bates."

In addition to the five clinics, LifeLong has several special programs which are partly financed by and/or associated with other agencies. At the Berkeley Primary Care facility, on Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings, when the regular clinic is not operating, they run The Lifelong Clinic. This is the first place for people to come if they have no insurance. From here, they get referred to the other clinics.

People also get help in determining if they are eligible for Medi-Cal and if so, the staff helps them with the application process. All the doctors who work here volunteer their time. One appreciative client contrasts her experience at Alta Bates Hospital where, if you don't have Medi-Cal, "they make you feel like a bad person," while here, "the doctors really listen to the patients — they really care."

A special clinic for young people is held on Tuesday evenings at the Berkeley Primary Care facility. The receptionist, Masuma, is an Americorps volunteer. She explains that they "provide services such as STD testing, HIV testing, confidential social services. It's a place where under-25 youth can go for free and get their medical needs taken care of."

Masuma also does outreach on Telegraph Avenue and People's Park and other places where young people gather, to make sure they know about the clinic.

Down the hall from Berkeley Primary Care is the acupuncture clinic. It is a unique program and highly appreciated. In the words of one client who has been going there for years, "This place is truly amazing." Every weekday morning, patients can come in, have a snack and a cup of special tea, and go into the treatment room where they have acupuncture needles inserted at particular points in their ears.

Jane Wineapple, one of the acupuncturists, describes how the body has channels of energy, which, like blood channels, need good circulation for the body to function well. Needles are inserted at critical points to facilitate this circulation. Points in the ear, she explains, have been found to be "most effective in controlling cravings, working out stress."

It's important to come often to receive acupuncture treatments and, she warns, recovery is a long process. "It takes the body a long time to get out of balance; it takes a while to get back in balance."

The treatment room has soft lighting with comfortable chairs for as many as a dozen people. Here the patients sit quietly for up to an hour, the calm, soothing atmosphere and low background music allowing them to heal from the stress and uncertainties of their daily lives

One patient explains, "It helps ground me in the morning." Daniel, another patient, lists three reasons for coming in: "One, I'm in recovery; two, mental health issues; and three, this is a good way, spiritually, a good way to connect in the morning."

Debra Jones, who had been coming to the clinic for over two years, has not only been healed but inspired. "It's really helped me to deal with a lot of things in my life and to get some focus. As a matter of fact, I opened a holistic clinic myself." She's in the process of developing a support center in downtown Oakland.

All the people coming into the clinic are homeless or close to homelessness. Jabari Corglie, who does intake for the clinic, says, "We cater to the homeless populations; that's the basis of this clinic." He goes on to explain, "We have a wide range of clients. Some come for recovery, some for pain management and some for mental health issues."

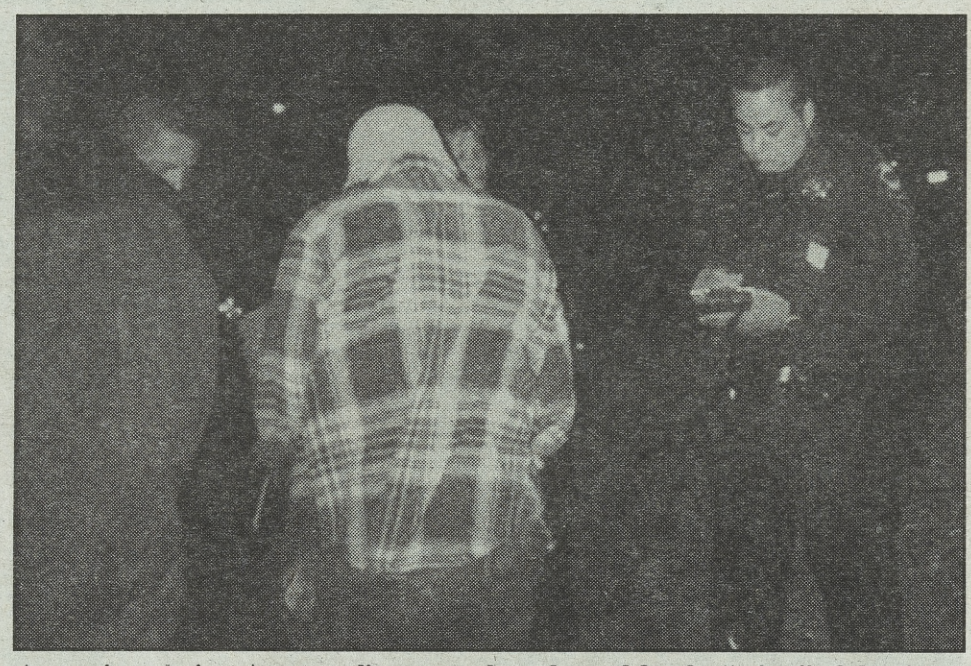
Yet when all these people, with their many problems and different ways of dealing with their lives, sit quietly together in one room, knowing that they are in a safe place where they are accepted just as they are, something very positive is taking place.

See **LifeLong Health Care** *page 14*

Solutions to Arcata's Housing Crisis



A positive solution: **Arcata Food Not Bombs provides food to poor and hungry people.**



A negative solution: **Arcata police arrest the unhoused for the "crime" of sleeping.**

by Tad

As a houseless activist in Arcata, I spend so much time trying to bring attention to the unhoused issue, I sometimes fail to take time to talk about solutions. Solutions don't come from simply throwing money at the situation. It takes time and a commitment to solve the problem. It may take two, three or 100 attempts, but it will always go smoother if we really give the answers a try. The following suggestions are just a few I have learned about, and there are probably hundreds more, but I like these because they address several problems above and beyond just homelessness.

First, I think it is important to discuss the reasons why our laws aren't solving the problem. Jails and punishment by the court system cannot accomplish anything positive. The war on drugs is a classic example of where the jails have totally failed to accomplish a single goal of the campaign to eliminate drugs. Why? Because you can't solve medical problems with law enforcement officers.

With those unhoused, it is an economic problem, and jail will not give these people jobs. We have about four million people officially unemployed in this country. We have another five million who are no longer even counted as part of the unemployed, yet who still want work. Add to this the two million people joining the work force every year, and almost four million unhoused, and you have an economic crisis that, in pure numbers, is worse than the Great Depression.

If you add to this the 40 million people living below the poverty level, and the 70 million Americans who don't have the medical insurance needed to protect them from catastrophic illness, you end up with an ever-increasing homeless population.

The police are not employed to fight crime associated with homelessness. Trash is one of the big concerns of people living in our parks and public land, yet the local Ranger Bob stated under oath in court that he never gives littering tickets; he mostly just gives camping tickets. When people are ticketed for non-crimes like sleeping, then you have eliminated the fear of committing other crimes. You also take away from the unhoused a sense of community.

Just a few years ago, the unhoused people felt pride living in such a liberal place as Arcata. They tended to at least mention to one another what this community considered acceptable behavior. Now it is the ones who seem to pride themselves on unacceptable behavior who inhabit so much of our town. If you have to have homelessness — and until we develop solutions, it will continue to grow — then you should strive to have the coolest, greenest, Arcatan type of unhoused community you can get.

Many of the people who come through Arcata are young people facing the worst unemployment situation in modern history.

These people are your children and my children. They are basically good kids who, like Mayor Bob Ornelas, came hitchhiking into Arcata because they heard we were different. It seems to me if you have these fertile minds, eager to learn about sustainability, environmental consciousness, alternative energy, human rights and peace activism, and you send them away complaining about Arcata fascism, then we have not only done a great disservice to these young people, but perhaps to all of mankind as well.

The most obvious problem we seem to have with the unhoused population is the small groups that hang out on the plaza. I say this is obvious, because of the amount of attention given a really small segment of our population. We have a downtown cop whose only job is to keep these people moving out of town.

An in-depth study of homelessness asked case managers what homeless people needed to get off the streets and they answered: more case workers. When the same question was asked of homeless people, their answers were jobs, a living wage and affordable housing.

I personally believe the plaza is a much less enjoyable place since the street musicians were run off. We have several hundred citizens who want a place they can play their drums and enjoy each other's company. If this was city was truly "for the people and by the people," we would have a place for these people to go.

The downside of driving the music and vitality out of the plaza is that some of the people who now come to Arcata to spend their money in the plaza businesses will go to the new park instead, as this is our biggest attraction. We look everywhere for "tourist attractions," yet we don't see what is right in front of us. The small coastal town of Mendocino makes its tourist dollars from being the town that hippies built. When are we going to stop saying that our economy is the results of Pacific Lumber and HSU, both who predominately hire from outside the area?

A few years ago I was traveling through a town named Paris, Texas. A warehouse was converted into a thrift store, a cardboard recycling station, and small rooms, both dorm style and individual rooms. The system worked fairly well. People would come off the streets, and live in the dorms until a room could be emptied or built for them. They worked collecting the city's used cardboard, baling it and loading it on trucks.

About fifty people were employed and housed there. I believe we could do the same thing in Arcata, maybe utilizing that boondoggle transfer station we built on Samoa. I envision a curbside recycling program that uses homeless people, bicycles, and our recycling station. Two or three employees would pick up trailers loaded with tin cans, mayonnaise jars, and newspapers, while the homeless workers get to keep all recyclables and tips.

Using the police to clamp down on homeless people is very expensive. The $60-70,000 a year we pay for each police officer is just the tip of the iceberg. That doesn't include their cars and gasoline, the court costs, their overtime and other costs to maintain a police force. The national average is $90,000 a year to dress a police officer and put them in a patrol car. We have three police focused on homeless people in Arcata right now: two "Park Rangers" and a downtown patrol officer. Instead, homeless people could be employed by the city as temporary labor to spend this police money fixing potholes, picking up trash, cleaning storm drains, etc.

Camp sites are another obvious answer to homelessness, and one we clearly need. Currently it is illegal to sleep in Arcata if you don't own, rent or have permission to be on land. Thus, if you are unhoused and fall asleep, you're a criminal. We need places for people to live until things get better, or until this permanent housing they promise becomes a reality.

Campgrounds could reduce many of our problems. People could pool their meager resources, cook communally and have those other 16 meals a week that the Endeavor does not provide. This would reduce the number of people begging for alms on our streets.

The person flying a sign and making $50,000 a year is an urban myth. The truth is that most people beg for hours and only make about 10 dollars a day. The shelter in Eureka actually gives out literature encouraging people not to give homeless people money. Yet, homeless people need things just like everyone else.

People donate to a shelter that takes the lion share from every homeless person, who gets a general relief check to pay for a shelter that can't even house that many people. Then, the shelter operators — with their own hand out for donations — have the audacity to tell you not to give money to those less fortunate then yourself. This would be a good place to point out that most homeless people never dreamed they would be in this condition.

When I was in Phoenix, the police had an incentive program for courteous drivers. When an officer saw a kind driver, they would give them money. A similar incentive program would be the talk of the unhoused community. A city employee could go out and give some polite, respectful panhandler, once a week, a crisp 20 dollar bill, compliments of the City. Would it work? Yes, proactive peace officers are the only types of policing that work.

Knee-jerk, reactionary law enforcement officers are one reason crime rates are out of control. When arrests equal promotions in the police force, the probability of graft and totalitarianism increase. But when we have police who believe that jail is the last resort and to be utilized only for as long as it takes to protect the rest of society, then they gain our respect, thus creating mutual aid; and our cities become easier to police and thus safer for everyone.

If you come early to the Arcata farmers' market, you will probably see the police rounding up and running off the unhoused. I say don't run them off — invite them to take part. Maybe create a zone just inside on the grass where poor people would be allowed to sell their wares. Making wares and selling them is honest work. Unhoused people live hand-to-mouth, so all they make will be spent right here in local businesses.

We have always been a responsive community in Arcata. We have started to look for answers to so many problems that are of global consequence. This is just another opportunity for Arcata to shine and show the rest of the world that problems can be solved.

The Urban Institute did the most in-depth study of homelessness to date. They asked case managers what homeless people needed to get off the streets and they answered: more case workers. When the same question was asked of the homeless and ex-homeless, their answers were jobs, a living wage and affordable housing.

The economy is going into the crapper. They are trying to stop it using the very techniques that put it there. Deregulation and trickle-down economics may increase business profits, due to gross inequities; but, for most of us, they just turn brother against brother for fewer and fewer crumbs that are left over.

The prophets of old said that what you do to the least of your brethren, you do unto God. But I say what you allow to happen to the least of your brethren, you do unto God and eventually yourself. If we believe that the business interests that have so permeated our local and national governments will do the right thing, in lieu of the cheapest or easiest thing, we are too naive. We must all scream for local solutions, before we realize that we are the next to be standing in the homeless line.

Tad is a dedicated houseless activist in Arcata, a small town north of Eureka. Comments on this story can be sent to him c/o tadspeace@yahoo.com.

Tales of Young Urban Squatters

Burch's accounts of squatting reveal the madness of capitalism. The children of the working class are considered disposable throwaways, diagnosed as mentally ill, overmedicated in pysch wards and juvenile halls, then turned out to live on the streets.



Claire Burch's new book includes Lydia Gans' photos of homeless youth on the streets of Berkeley.

Review by Jesse Clarke

What is property? Property is theft. So wrote Pierre Joseph Proudhon, one of the progenitors of mutualist anarchism, in his classic essay on mutualism and the role of property.

But while capitalist enclosure of the commons and peasant resistance are part of anarchist folklore, the contemporary realities of social isolation and the escalation of urban gentrification have pushed squatting out of view as a direct solution to homelessness. Claire Burch's new collection of *Tales of Young Urban Squatters* brings us back to that simple question. Why not squat?

Her book begins with a hypersurrealist sketch of one squatter's view from below. Speedy tells us, "My clothes are held together with scraps of leather and other material, a patchwork sewn with dental floss. I don't subscribe to the disposable economy of our oppressors."

Young runaways, juvenile hall escapees and train-hopping travelers explain what it's like to live on the run even while sitting still on Telegraph Avenue.

In Speedy's opening tale, we are invited to consider a reality where the rich are breathing fresh oxygen in orbital space stations while a vaporous yellow haze overpowers earth's atmosphere and the rivers "bubble with shit and old condoms." Skyscrapers crumble and "incomplete stairways wind their way like spinal cords through the rib cage of the structure." The warmth of a squat or a psych ward are a temporary respite.

Claire Burch, the editor of *Tales of Young Urban Squatters*, put these tales together over the course of four years of conducting writing workshops in People's Park, on the street and in her home. An unpaid volunteer living off her social security, Burch says, "Somehow I've gotten tangled with the lives of people on the street. I'm not altogether sure how it happened, but I started to care about them."

Burch says of her young students, "Most of them would be described as anarchists. Almost all put down anything involving government." But their political philosophy lacks the ideology of earlier generations of Berkeley's squatters.

Burch herself gives a non-ideological answer when asked why she presents the views of these young rebels. "Well I do think I'd like to put in a good word for squatting, given the alternatives," she says. "If you have kids who are not going to go to a shelter, a squat is a good choice. There are a lot of abandoned buildings out there."

An underground squatters' manual is in the book's appendix. It gives step-by-step instructions on how to get, defend and preserve a squat. Clearly a product of the English squatting movement, the manual hints at the political iceberg lying under this slice of squatting life.

My tingling suspicion is that these youth may have glimpsed the rainbow world at the far end of the tunnel, even if they had to O.D. on heroin to get there.

I remember the day I realized that capitalism was a planetary phenomenon from which I could not escape geographically. I was ready to become a teenage runaway.

Standing in a suburban roadway hitchhiking, I had just left the local library, which was stocked with a fine selection of social histories and political science texts. I had stolen Woodcock's very fine history of anarchism from the library and was fantasizing leaving the country to escape the draft. It was the fall of 1972 and I still had two years until registration. I was 16 years old, a senior in high school, a social outcast and living in almost completely hermetic isolation. I was in deep resistance to the dominant culture and had almost no relationships to my stepfamily with whom I was imprisoned.

I suddenly realized that I would always be an anarchist. That communism, vanguardism and capitalism were all destined to failure. That to run away would be to simply find the same problems in another guise. That the only escape was to endure an entire life of oppression on the off chance that the empire would fall before my death. In reading *Tales of Young Urban Squatters*, I felt comfortably at home with a similar apocalypticism of the mundane.

The book is a gritty compilation of first-person accounts of squatting that reveal that the madness of capitalism has reached its apogee. The children of the working class are considered disposable throwaways, diagnosed as mentally ill, overmedicated in pysch wards and juvenile halls, then turned out to live on the streets.

Youth resurrected from heroin overdoses recount journeys to the other side of this life. A young stripper describes how she wears wigs to work in order to prevent the world from recognizing her in the photos illegally shot by johns who come into the Lucky Lady peep show. Above all, we get close-up views of everyday life as an outlaw, where the police, the owner, the neighbors, the merchants, even the pedestrians, are always ready to tell you to move along, get out of town, get a job, fuck off.

Burch says she's really pissed off, and would prefer that the government spend less on war, prisons, and the rich, and create more programs for homeless youth. She herself simply brought them home with her for the writing groups. "Frequently neighbors would complain that there was noise or chaos going on. Occasionally they would call the cops because someone was asleep in the driveway."

In teaching the students, Burch says she erred on the side of minimalism, asking the writers to simply describe their feelings right then. She says, "I gave as little advice as possible. To me, the thing that was valuable was the untaught part of it."

Squatting isn't something for the fainthearted. It's illegal, dangerous, dirty, and unlikely to advance your career. It could expose you to evil landlords, deadly health hazards and unreliable roommates. It does have one great advantage. There is no rent. The diverse narratives of the *Tales* reveal the lived knowledge of this incredible freedom. If you are a rent slave, land slave, wage slave, you may be able to intuitively grasp the righteousness of not paying rent or mortgage, but have you ever lived it?

Claire Burch has recently completed work on a video about the *TeleTimes*, a Telegraph Avenue newspaper of the early 1980s. *Tales of Young Urban Squatters* can be ordered online at amazon.com or can be ordered direct from the publisher at Regent Press, 6020 A Adeline St. Oakland CA 94608

Just in Case

by Chris Trian

I can see myself now
in a catholic country.
I won't tell you where.
You might track me down.

I'll be sitting bent and old
at a plain wooden table
with a Bible and some
small icons of the saints
which I've painted for the poor,
the lost and the silent,
and which I sell to others
with their Holy
sweet-smelling living rooms.

If I'm here at all
it means my wife has died first,
and I will be, in a sense,
dead too.
So I'm writing this just in case.
Something with my face,
beard shaved, even thinner,
with a different name and I.D.
will be burning down the world
straw by straw
in the guise of a man of God.
But I AM a man of God.
God's not a bargain basement.
There's room for all of us in here.
I will have left everything behind.
A terrible burden for my kids,
but *se la guerre*.
Thousands of paintings.
Thousands of poems and
fingernails that were torn out
one by one,
only to grow back resentfully,
as well as piles of the dirt
that was under them
as I scratched
at the coffin lid of the air.

Here, now and old,
I pick up my Bible
and take a pill or a drink..
I hope it doesn't come
to the drink again.
But I also hope
there will be peace in Israel
or in Hell.
And that the homeless
make it across the deserts
of parking lots
and freeway underpasses —
Across the rivers of dead people
in their dead cars,
across the sadness and hope
which is the great
American landscape.
But I will die in another country.
I will not die happy.
Not even the spiders
are happy any more.
But I will have
passed over something
with the fire of my rage
and dignity intact inside me.
Under a different name
and a different star.
All my unnecessary parts
having been cut off
and fed to the pigeons
that sit all over me
on a park bench by the fountain
where I wash my paint brushes.
An old man in an old place.
Old wine in old wine skins.

There are millions like me
who will escape the inescapable.
We don't vote and we don't count
and we don't dance
and we don't care.
But we are THERE
waiting for death,
like a teenage girl
who leaves her back door open
on full moon nights
with a red candle burning,
and a crucifix tucked
under the hair curlers,
just in case.

Crackdown On Street Teenagers

by Julia Vinograd

The young street kids aren't violent
or crazy or screaming.
They just sit around cuddling puppies and each other;
they'd have to stand up to bother anyone
and it's too much trouble.
They share crumbling day-old donuts and black nail polish
and I write about them.
The city just sent a big police presence
to arrest my poems.
There's 2 cop cars on the avenue, 3 if you count
the one that went up the next block,
a pair patrolling the sidewalk
and a huge black paddywagon
that I think I saw in an Al Capone movie.
All this to arrest my poems
and I can't go downtown and get them back, eventually,
the way people do with a towed-away car.
The sidewalk is unconvincingly clear.
There should be kids in black t-shirts
and spiked leather bracelets
occasionally slapping a broken-stringed guitar.
There should be a girl with orange dreadlocks and beads
beating her small drum with her bellybutton.
There should be a boy drawing happy monsters
on the pavement with colored chalk.
The city says teenagers block doorways
and are bad for business.
But poetry is my business
and this crackdown is bad for my business.

Pick Up the Pieces

A Berkeley Mystery

The final installment

I was no Don Quixote, but she was my Dulcinea.



"Addiction" Artwork by Art Hazelwood

Fiction by Kevin McFarren

One stole my heart. The other stole my money. One of them also stole my watch, but it is too late to worry about that now. They both ended up dead. So did I, all for different reasons and all from different causes.

As a disbarred attorney and sometime private investigator, I have seen a great many bad things over the years. The streets of the Bay Area turn up all sorts of tragedies.

This series of events tore me apart. I have written "Berkeley Mystery" stories for over two years now. This will be the last. I never knew fiction would come so close to home.

Theo and I have known each other for over two decades. When I broke up with my wife, I walked with one duffel bag from our house on Cedar in Berkeley to his apartment on Alcatraz Avenue. At 3 a.m., a bleary-eyed Theo opened the door, pointed to the sofa, and said, "We will talk about this in the morning."

He got me on my feet and we remained friends for years. As he moved from place to place, we remained close. We were good friends.

I was often jealous because he usually had young, beautiful women at his place. It took me some time to realize that this tall, good-looking, former pro basketball player had prostitutes coming in and out.

THE CHEMISTRY WAS IMMEDIATE

The most recent he introduced me to was a lovely young woman named Laura. It was by chance; I had stopped by and there she was. The chemistry was immediate. They were arguing, so I offered to take her out. On the walk to my place, she admitted she was homeless, and apart from Theo's, she had no place. Against my better judgment (and my rental agreement), I offered to let her stay with me.

We had a long weekend, during which she admitted she was a working girl. She used my phone to set up some "dates" before she left. Laura had brought a small amount of crack cocaine and some marijuana. I was not comfortable, but as they say, "not going to throw her out of bed for eating crackers."

Laura left that third afternoon. She said she was meeting a man she had "dated" before. He would be picking her up in a white van. The small hairs on the back of my neck stood up. Urban legends seem to have white vans, a very spooky phenomenon. Any time there was a disappearance, especially of young people, there were reports of suspicious white vans in the area.

I walked her downstairs and felt relieved when she recognized her "date" in a black SUV across the street. She hugged me, walked a few steps, and came back and kissed me. She said, "I'll be back; it is only a job." She waved as she got into the SUV.

She was never seen alive again.

I thought she had simply left me. Maybe found a sugar daddy, or a ride out of town. Little did I know. What little was left of Laura was fished out of the Oakland estuary weeks later.

It was as if I had found a beautiful feral cat. I fed her and gave her someplace safe to curl up. She responded with warmth and more than a little kindness. Eventually, I wanted to domesticate her. I wanted to protect her from the predators out there. I was blind. Perhaps she was a predator herself. I could not change her into the one I wanted her to be. The street and the crack were too much of a magnet.

I was no Don Quixote, but she was my Dulcinea.

ANOTHER WORKING GIRL

Meanwhile, Theo introduced me to another working girl. No doubt a crack addict, but Theo thought I needed somebody. We did not know Laura was dead. And I was alone. She was staying in a motel on MacArthur Boulevard.... Because Theo introduced us, I trusted her. My mistake. The crack habit was eating her up. I caught her going through my hidden stash of cash. She had already pulled several large bills. I had already paid her. (Probably too much.) She was stealing from me.

Then the phone call came. Laura was dead.

She laughed and said Laura was nothing but a crack whore and was no doubt stealing from me too.

I could have taken her to a homeless encampment in West Berkeley where they would have humiliated her and possibly violated her (they seem like nice folks to me, but you never know...) before killing her and feeding her to the crabs. After all, I do their legal work for free. They owe me something.

But no, I did not realize how strong my hands were when I put them around her throat. She was gone before I knew it.

Now what? A dead crack whore in my apartment with my DNA all over her. She weighed 100 pounds, at most, so self-defense was not a realistic option. I knew enough about the State Department of Corrections to realize I could never survive incarceration. The Berkeley Fishing Pier was too far away and the murky water too cold. So I took the last resort. Warm water in the tub; sharp blade on both wrists....

PICKING UP THE PIECES

This is Persimmon. I knew he had been seeing Theo's whores. After not hearing from him for several days, I drove over and used my spare set of keys to enter. She was in the corner of the kitchen, clearly dead. He was in the bathtub, smiling, soaking in blood-tainted water.

I cried; I still cry. I knew enough to grab the cash before the officials arrived.

I know people. Theo will answer for all this. Then perhaps my crying will stop, and Theo will float in that same murky water.

I am the only one left. There are no more Berkeley Mysteries. The community kills its own. I know where the bodies are buried, and I am not telling. I am going to sleep now, perchance to dream...

The Value of Innocence

My definition of innocence is the quality of believing in good, and believing that good will be rewarded.

by Jack Bragen

There have been times in my life during which I had plenty of reason to believe that I might not come out of a situation alive. Simply while driving my car, I've experienced a number of nearly fatal situations where I have come out without a scratch. There was the time I've mentioned in past writings wherein I was held at gunpoint for eleven hours during one of my work shifts at a job I held at age 19.

There were other situations as well, in which coming out alive should not have been a certainty. These situations had something in common, which was that I didn't believe I was supposed to die. And the second, intertwined factor was that this belief that I would live through this led me to take the actions that allowed me to survive.

I am not unique in any of this. Anyone who has fought in a war has experienced the same thing, probably a hundred-fold the amount I have. The quality that gets you through danger is the illusion of immortality. This is a form of innocence. This is where when you were a young child and watched Lorne Greene on TV westerns and saw that the good guys always won, you absorbed it.

There is a second facet to innocence I want to mention — a very important one. I know people who, at some point, have given up. A lot of what they gave up was the will to be good. They succumbed to the encroaching belief that the universe is a cruel place that has an uncaring god. Perhaps they can't recall Martin Luther King saying that the moral arm of the universe is long, but it reaches for justice and goodness. Maybe these people never watched Captain Kirk, who sometimes only survived by a lucky break.

I am bothered when I see people who are the first to admit they don't care if they are doing an unethical thing, or a thing that harms someone else. I pity people like that. These are people who have truly lost the battle. Some of them are wealthy people. Some are president of the United States.

My definition of innocence is the quality of believing in good, and believing that good will be rewarded. It is the state of still trying to lead a respectable existence and of knowing that you will get through a hard time, because you know that it is in the script.

Do We Live in Orwellian Times?

by Jack Bragen

I am a person with what some call a mental illness. When I experience the repeated psychotic episodes of my illness, one of the primary reoccurring themes that runs throughout my thinking — a very disturbing theme — is that of an Orwellian conspiracy taking over our society.

The question is: Is there some gigantic conspiracy to turn the country into a fully-blown Orwellian state? Or, is this society merely crumbling from the inside because of societal entropy? I believe the only answer is: Time will tell.

Meanwhile, gas prices are at new heights at the same time as there are no jobs. Incarceration rates have risen to peak levels, seemingly for the purpose of proving that anybody can be locked up for any reason. Pornography is OK on TV commercials, but is permitted nowhere else on TV. Nobody is rioting to protest the war. The "war on terror" was seemingly successful; now we're all apathetic, jaded and tired, instead of being terrified. A movie star is rescuing California.

The Roman Empire was also a democracy. Their senators drank their wine from lead cups, causing poor decision-making due to lead poisoning. The Roman Empire also fell apart from the inside.

What She Tasted

by Michael Creedon

They were spoken softly, the words,
By the mother to her perhaps slightly
Haughty 16-year-old daughter:
"You don't know how dangerous
This city is at night."
You guessed it:
That night while everyone else
In the shelter slept,
The girl crept softly out
From the shelter.

And San Francisco was
Beautiful at night.
Brenda found herself
In a Wonderland of waifs
As lost as herself:
The Tenderloin.

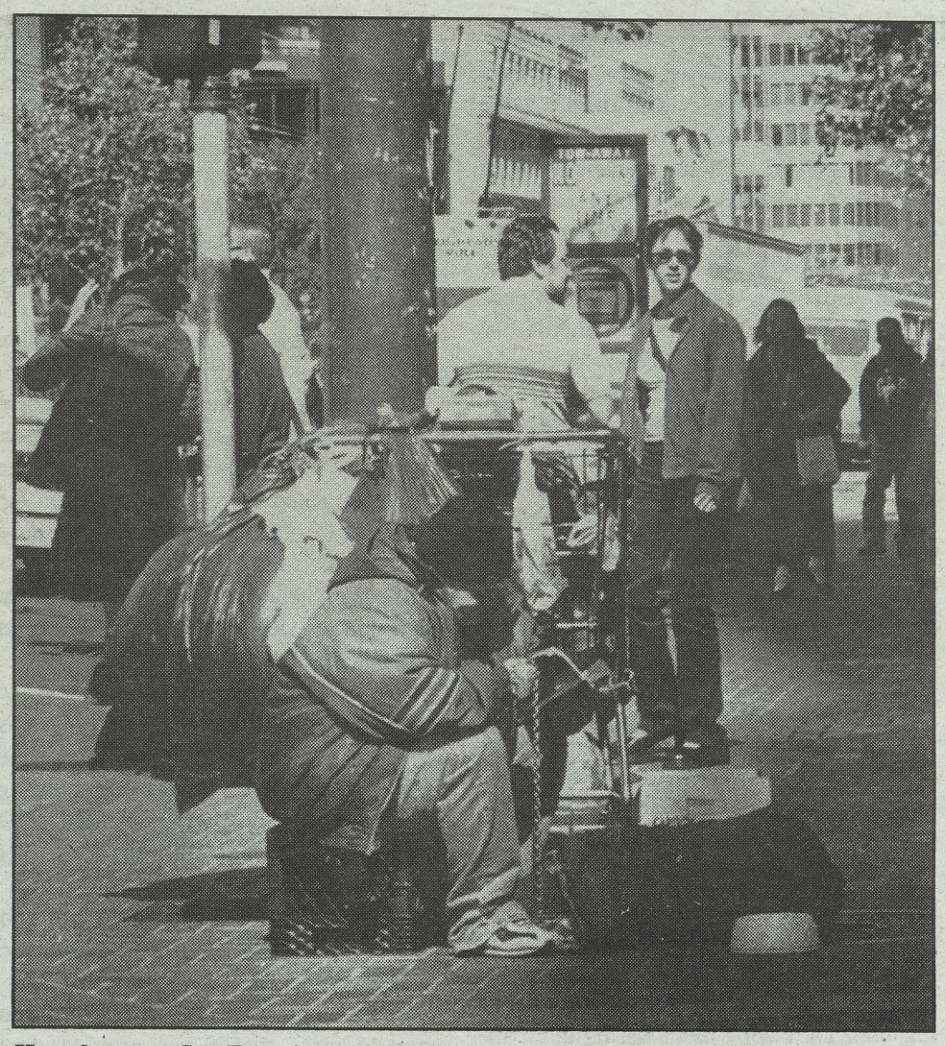
And that night
She tasted pot
And she tasted crack
And finally
Just before dawn

She tasted death.

Immortalized

by Michael Creedon

A group of teenage runaways were
Squatting on the sidewalk on Telegraph
Making color drawings on the sidewalk
With pastel chalks — really quite
Beautiful drawings if you looked,
And a dog sat with them, a friendly
Little black-and-white terrier,
And two Berkeley Guides joined
The group, and all were having a
Good time, which got even better
When some anonymous soul
Sent over a couple large pizzas
With everything from Blondie's.
It was the very picture of harmony
And someone started taking
Photographs to immortalize the scene
& it was thus immortalized.
Amen



Homeless on a San Francisco sidewalk, with bagfuls of belongings. Lydia Gans photo

See Me?

by Claire J. Baker

I'm just chuggin' down the street —
the only one in my parade.
Got two arms and these two feet.
I'm just luggin' down the street
this heaped-up basket, in retreat.
Don't have AIDS and don't get aid.
Hey I'm movin' down the street —
the only one in my parade.

Earth and Sky

by Perfesser Creek-Water

The sky is my roof
The earth is my home
This much is true
Wherever I roam

A positive attitude
Out on "the street"
Respect and compassion
For people I meet

I try to go forward
Each day as I live
If you do me wrong
I am quick to forgive

If I do you wrong
Then I hope and I pray
That we soon can be friends again
Without delay

Nicholas' Journey

by Lynda Cobden

The bitter, frosty, dark, early-morning, bone-chilling cold
surrounded him and involuntary frozen tears glided
on his cheeks. Yesterday he sold some *Street Spirits*
so he could take the bus and defrost.
While he trudged up the hill he thought of Robert Frost's poem
about a man trudging through the woods on a snowy night,
and Frost's words: "miles to go before I sleep."
I have been down miles of roads for sure.
He thought, substitute the woods for buildings
and I'm in an urban forest. At last the bus is
coming and the warm heat transforms him.
It's a very long, hard season on the street.

nature's hotel

by Randy Fingland

sitting curbside
in the rain

there's no room
service, in fact

there's really
no room

just a wooden
bench under

a bare tree
wet & dripping

conservationist

by Randy Fingland

the man squatting
on his haunches
in the park,
a steaming tin cup
pressed between his palms,
said with a slow apologetic
dip of his head,
"awfully careful of
spilling soup kitchen soup
this far from the source."

Homeless

by Mosetta Rose London

The sky is their rooftop
And the sidewalk is their floor
The park is their bedroom
The night air is their door.

Walking aimlessly along
Looking in the passing faces
And everywhere they happen to drift
Is like all the other places.

Self-esteem seems to be gone now
Their headquarters is skid row
You shake your heads and wonder
How did they ever sink so low?

Well, some had good jobs once
And some never worked a day
Many somehow lost their grip and fell
And some just never found their way.

Some turned to alcohol and drugs
Many just simply gave up
You see them in the long soup lines
Begging on corners with a cup.

Some are mentally ill people
Who cannot get medical aid
Because they don't have enough income
For their bills to be paid.

Who knows the many reasons why
But do we have the right to judge?
Should we try to find a way to help
And do it without a grudge?

They say that so many of us
Are only one or two paychecks away
From being on the streets ourselves
If our rent we cannot pay.

So I'll leave you with these final thoughts
To help you think on this a bit deeper
Should the strong try to help the weak?
Yes, are we our brothers' keeper?

Street Crazy Playing A Flute

by Julia Vinograd

Her mind ran over her face like a train wreck.
What was left twitched at off moments
but she played a wooden flute
as if her hands belonged to someone else
who never worried.
Thin shoulders huddled around the music,
stuck in a pile of clothes that would rather be in a closet
and treated her like a jerky stain.
Might've been young if she'd been someone else.
A grey cold evening.
Everyone in a hurry to get off the street
before it didn't rain.
Nobody stopped to watch her play
so she played elbow-shaped notes and chords
stamping like boots for warmth, an almost crowd
but they had no faces, she always had trouble with faces.
Inside, people made dinners.
Hospital food had been beef stew
without the beef and frightened jello.
Her flute was hungry for candied rose petals
and catastrophes. She'd passed a restaurant once.
Thru the window she'd seen a tray piled high with lobsters
and bright small pointed instruments
either for cracking shells or brain surgery.
Her flute poured out soft warm buttersauce
into the cold evening till if you were a lobster
you'd love to be eaten.
She'd been 5150'd briefly.
She hadn't noticed enough to be annoyed
except they'd defined her flute as a hard object
and taken it away. Now she had it back.
What would've been a smile for someone else
crawled onto her face.
Her flute played Mount Rushmore for a closing flourish,
not presidents' faces (she always had trouble with faces)
but mountain-sized hot fudge sundaes with whipped cream
and a cherry. Then she put down her flute.
When the silence came looking for her
she ran away.

Makeshift Home

by Lynda Cobden

He took two plastic tarps and fashioned a tent.
There were no rooms available at the housing lottery
today, despite waiting in line for 45 minutes.
Under the tent he had a little privacy and it broke
the fierce wind on a bone-chilling night.
The thermos of coffee helped a bit.
He pulled the sleeping bag tight and the blankets
provided a little ground cover from the hard cement.
The fierce wind and sleeting rain even clattered the
large heavy sewage covers. He turned from side to side
restlessly and woke at the sound of sirens around 2 a.m.
and then the clatter of trash cans at 4:30 a.m.
Finally there was a little daylight breaking and he knew
he would need to move on before masses of humanity
walked on by, just walked on by.

TRASH-RAP

by Perfesser Creek-Water (Mark Dorazio)

It's about being home-less, not hope-less, 'cuz u know
Being out on "The Street" but not beat, even tho
U don't hav a dime, u hav lots of free time
To pick up the trash and the broken glass
In the parks and the places where we all hang out
Environment is what I'm talk'n about
And I really don't wanna hear any excuses
If we each do a little then it really reduces
The amount of litter in the neighbor-hood
And a clean neighbor-hood makes us all look good
And we wanna look good, now don't we?? Uh-huh…
So the next time u see any litter on the street or
The park or the playground where yr friends all meet
If everybody put a little bit in the can
Then soon it's gonna look like a brand-new plan
And a nice and neat and clean neighbor-hood
Makes us all look good and we wanna look good
Now don't we? Uh-huh, uh-huh
Cuz we wanna look good, now don't we?? Uh-huh…

Berkeley's Innovative Multi Agency Service Center

from page eight

carrying around to give to people ever since some homeless people talking to me on the bus asked me where they could go for a shower or food or a bed.

Godwin explains that at MASC, "We do interagency networking. For example, a MASC case worker, Lauren, is our liaison in meeting with Berkeley Mental Health."

A client walks by and asks, "Can I have some pepper?" Godwin, keeper of the cups, paper plates and condiments, offers a packet. He continues his story:

"I came from Uganda 21 years ago. My sister came to school here, got married, and when we had political unrest she helped me find sanctuary in this country, in Berkeley. I would like to take my children to see the culture in Uganda, learn its history and my roots, but these are my people here now. I lived in India 10 years, Kenya two years, then went back to Uganda before I came here.

"In Uganda it is the family and neighborhood which support people. People might be poor, but unless they are in the city, they can grow their own food, and have food to share. Drug culture cannot spread so rapidly or be as devastating where there is extended family-like support. But in any country or culture, crack cocaine is the most serious threat to the individual and society. Some use it just once and will be hooked.

"We try to have community at MASC. Family style, we gather around the TV on weekends, watch sports. People identify around favorite teams. Many had sports at school and recalling these past interests or having a present team loyalty takes one out of oneself. For awhile they forget homelessness worries. My favorite team is the Kings from Sacramento — see, I'm wearing a King's logo hat."

Two women pass by, one telling an anecdote. I hear part of the story: "She tried to take a shower, I tried to help her. She doesn't use drugs, she loses her balance...." Health problems are very prevalent in the homeless community.

Godwin continues: "A Social Service bus, funded by the city, comes here at 11:00 a.m. and takes people to check their mail. The bus makes two daily runs, at 11:00 a.m. and at 12, to take people to a church for a meal. They eat at different churches on different days, Monday through Thursday. Each church funds its own meal program. Most churches in Berkeley, all denominations, have some social service program which they fund."

The telephone calls come. Godwin is busy answering. He directs a caller to Berkeley Mental Health on MLK and Derby, encourages them to seek help. He tells another caller about "Options." It's upstairs in the Veteran's Building. It's founded by Dr. Coady, helped along by the late, beloved Father Bill O'Donnell, and helps adults find alternatives for alcohol abuse and other problems. He tells another caller, "Call 532-1930, Health Care for the Homeless, and they will give you their schedule."

Godwin returns to his story: "How did I prepare myself for nonviolence? My personal experiences in Uganda and India taught me how an extended, encompassing community creates a compassionate support group. In India, I saw how people are one in unity as one humanity; and how for seven centuries, there has been this society which depends on people working together, not high tech.

"The essence of healing is nonviolence, the essence of religion is nonviolence. I am a Baha'i, and I pray every day.

"At MASC we learn from each other. Staff members and clients alike give input on how to deal with violence, how to achieve nonviolence. People are very motivated to be nonviolent here, because if a person needs services, they will be nonviolent to get them, to achieve goals.

"Once I did a figure count and there were 1400 transitory and long-term homeless using our various services in Berkeley. People with mental issues are a small percentage that come here; but people off of medication or not medically treatable don't focus enough to sustain their functioning to make progress

"The group decision here is that people who do not respond to staff requests for self-control, who attack others or are disruptive or insulting or attempt use or sale of drugs on the premises or who destroy or steal property in the program, courtyard or parking lot areas may be suspended or permanently banned. If it's a mental issue, I would call Crisis Unit Mobile Team, part of Berkeley Mental Health. I haven't needed to do this so I haven't actually seen them in action, but I know they are effective.

"Actually, when it comes to violence, it is the government that sets standards. When a government creates violence as a solution to getting along — all this war — people use the methods in their own lives. Governmental acts and attitudes create the society, and groups and individuals respond. They copy methods, fight, create enemies.

"I think that, at MASC, we are doing better than that."

LAUREN'S STORY

"I did an internship at MASC for a social work class as a student at U.C. and did intake," says Lauren. "After graduation I was offered a position here, and this was just what I wanted. I have been a case manager here for two years. I graduated from U.C. Berkeley with a BA in Social Welfare. During my time in school, I took many classes that discussed homelessness and poverty and I volunteered at various places in the community such as the Suitcase Clinic. Working here makes me feel I am contributing to a solution for many people's problems.

"It is effective. Between 125 and 200 people come in every day; sometimes it depends on the weather. Some come off the streets with no resources. If there are no interested family or friends with resources and connections, where do homeless people get help? What they find here is important to them."

A therapist from Berkeley Mental Health comes to MASC regularly and helps people gain entry to services. A lawyer from the Homeless Action Center (HAC) helps them with SSI Advocacy. A public health nurse from the City of Berkeley is available. Alameda County public health nurses go out in the Health Care for the Homeless van. Volunteers from Women's Daytime Drop In Center come to do HIV outreach and education. Anonymous HIV testing is available from the City of Berkeley.

MASC has several groups that meet regularly, including housing groups, drug and alcohol recovery groups, men's and women's support groups, and a weekly community meeting attended by staff and everyone else at MASC.

Lauren explains that a core group comes in every day, and about 30 to 50 new people a month. Some are newly homeless. Some come from Oakland or other cities, some are just out of jail or the hospital, or have lost their housing or jobs. Some are drug and alcohol users who have been on the streets awhile, but finally decide to come into MASC.

Lauren says she believes MASC is "a most insightful design. It is creative and very effective." She has come to understand that the way MASC works is because recovery and change is a process.

"When a person works on goals to get off the streets, it's an inner thing," she says. "Yet, if a person has depression or other issues that keep them from functioning at their best — that keep them from their goals — it is essential to have case managers to help them establish a plan, a list of steps for their ultimate goal.

"Some look for help, get help and make changes. Others, when they first come to MASC, just hang out; but then, they see people become healthier inside our site than on the street. We try to be protective, to keep drugs out, and have coffee and food, healthy food.

"Entertaining the mind helps too. People who come here can vote on movies to see. Reel Video is extremely generous, and we appreciate generosity as we survive on the generosity of others. Individuals and shops donate to us: towels, toiletries, clothes — socks are especially valued. The Claremont Hotel donates shampoo, which is always a needed item.

"There is an organization that helps to get support for MASC and other programs which are affiliated with it, and it is called BOSS. BOSS gets support and funding from the City, and partly through HUD (Housing and Urban Development) for MASC and its other programs."

I have recently asked people if Berkeley is among the most enlightened cities as to the need for interrelated services. Some have answered, and Lauren seems to agree, that it does provide more effective services than most cities and that this probably has a lot to do with the university. People study issues, research, and do great problem-solving. Then they get into political office or business or law or journalism where they can influence decisions or implement solutions.

Some men and women walk by to a table to pick up stacks of *Street Spirit*, 50 papers each, as MASC is a depot for them to get these newspapers. They go on their way to sell them. They keep all the money from sales, and get the word out about news and issues that affect them.

Lauren sees the necessity of the underground social infrastructure that is serving a significant subculture in Berkeley, but she is not satisfied, because she sees so much else that needs to be done. She says, "The roots of any plan must be housing. Housing is key. No low-income person can afford housing today. Homelessness, unemployment, services, need differing approaches according to demographic conditions, but other cities would do well to look at Berkeley for what it has accomplished as a model. Still, housing — no one has yet achieved —"

According to one view of the universe, a biblical passage many use as a guide, the poor you will always have with you. Does any other model show that this is not true? Forever there will be natural disasters, oppression, joblessness. Human beings will always undergo the failure of health, and mental and physical breakdowns. So you will be judged as to what you do to the poor in your society, and what the leaders you make the effort to choose will do because of your vote or because of your silence.

Each of us is given the personal responsibility to help design or provide for the jobs, income, housing, health care, child care, and education of the poorest among us — the continuous, recurrent needs of continuous, recurrent waves of the many poor, powerless, often voiceless, and homeless people.

So the universal command through all time and all countries and in your own local community is: Prepare the way for them, help them, because the poor will always be with you. Make the best plan possible so each time there is a person who becomes poor the resources will be there: the practical solutions for the problems that are the many components of poverty.

LifeLong Health Care

from page nine

LifeLong Medical Care is providing much-needed health services for an at-risk population, but their resources are stretched to the limit. They are already operating at a deficit. Funding cuts are forcing more government clinics to close; as a result, more patients are being sent to LifeLong's clinics and programs.

Director Marty Lynch expresses concern. "At this point in time, somewhere in our system we can get everybody in who calls, but I'm worried that it's not going to continue to be that way."

East Bay residents might want to begin counting the costs in human suffering if health care clinics continue closing and LifeLong's essential medical and social services are overwhelmed.

For Allen Cohen, A Poet Who Died

by Julia Vinograd

If you were alive today I wouldn't be thinking about you.
I never did.
Then we ran into each other,
your black curls bouncing with enthusiasm,
your arms flapping,
breathing hard enough to chase another group project, magazine, anthology
and we were so proud to be needed.
It was like a big red india-rubber ball
stamped with gold stars and thrown for us to catch.
You made it seem so easy
and we could no more think about you
than the centipede can think about which foot starts walking.
You were our first step
so many times.
So what now?
You were refreshing to be around
like cool water is good to drink.
Good people are usually embarrassing by contrast,
they make us feel we should pick up our insides
like dirty rooms of headless dolls and lost socks.
"Good" is a word we hear too much at funerals.
You were a good man
but we liked you anyway.
Your soul was used to getting up like a man in a crowded bus
offering his seat to an old woman with groceries.
But your soul offered its place to the world and the Lord.
"Rest In Me, O Lord" was the title
of your great poem in the peace anthology.
The Lord accepted your invitation.
You have to rest in peace,
and I'm going to see God doesn't get any rest at all.
We needed you more.

Rallying to Save the Safety Net

from page one

to find and keep jobs. This is an issue that the BOSS COT team — particularly Oakland organizer Bob Mills — is once again organizing around since the organizing efforts COT did on transportation justice four years are being unraveled.

Affordable transportation for low-income people is an issue of great concern to Assemblywoman Loni Hancock. During our discussion in Sacramento, she told me that the cuts the governor was still pushing need to be opposed, and that she intends to fight them. We agreed on the need to get constituents from districts represented by Republicans and others generally supportive of the governor's budget to contact their representatives to register their displeasure with proposed cuts to needed services.

Last year during the budget impasse, several Berkeley activists went into Assemblyman Guy Houston's district in Walnut Creek and successfully got his constituents to call in and get him to sign Gov. Davis' budget, thus breaking the deadlock created by Republican stonewalling and the threats and strong-arm tactics of their Assembly leader, Jim Bruite.

Contra Costa voters did not support last year's recall, despite 4,000 people showing up for Schwarzenegger's pre-election rally in Pleasanton, where his supporters heckled the Code Pink ladies by saying, "No one would want to grope you ladies."

At that rally, I showed up with a sign saying, "Arnold, Don't Cut Social Services." I got in a theological argument with a conservative Republican Christian about whether Jesus would look askance at Schwarzenegger's plan to balance the budget on the backs of the poor. He was quite sincere and nice about wanting to save me from the sins of poverty and gay-loving Berkeley liberalism, but did respect the sincerity and forthrightness of my convictions.

Another problem with the governor's budget is the freezing of SSI/SSP payments at a time when many clients also on Section 8 are experiencing increased rent payments due to the weakening of the program by the Bush administration and cuts to the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) budget.

Our Terminator governor is still trying to reduce the hours and push down the wages of In Home Support Services providers from $9.50 down to $6.75 an hour, which will severely impact the ability of the disabled to live independently. This reduction also penalizes attendants with low wages that don't enable them to pay rent and provide for themselves.

As an advocate and former attendant who used to work for little better than minimum wage, I knew we had to struggle to get those wages up. Remember that this work is usually not full time — it often means working a few hours in the early morning and a few hours in the late evening and being available for emergencies. These cuts will increase homelessness at a time when service providers have already been noticing a distressing increase in the number of disabled people winding up homeless on our streets.

The Terminator also wants to cut even further the money sent to the counties for General Assistance (GA). The GA benefit is already disastrously low in Alameda County, which reduced the GA grant to a miserly level and replaced the rest of it with a shelter voucher many years ago, long before San Francisco voters voted for Gavin Newsom's Proposition N. At least Newsom is asking San Francisco voters to fund much-needed supportive housing.

Meanwhile, funding for shelter beds has already been slashed, thus hampering our ability at BOSS to help get clients off the streets in Alameda County.

Health care is taking a major hit in the governor's budget. In addition to pay cuts for home care workers, he is proposing $72 million in cuts to community health centers. On May 18, the Eden Youth and Family Center held a lemonade sale — "making lemonade out of lemons" to protest what a lemon the governor's budget is. Schwarzenegger is still pushing for a federal waiver to overhaul Medi-Cal, and plans to announce details on August 2.

At the Sacramento rally on May 12, the Hunger Action Coalition (HAC) was pushing three pieces of legislation. The first bill is AB 1796 (Leno-SF) which would restore food stamp assistance to parents and others who have already served their time for drug felonies. All Or None, the civil rights group for ex-prisoners, has noted that many people now in recovery are finding that social sanctions based on their previous history of addiction and jail time are now hindering their efforts at self-sufficiency. (Contact HAC's Ana Hicks at (510) 834-3663, ext. 338 or e-mail to ahicks@accfb.org.)

HAC is also promoting AB 2200 (Hancock-Berkeley) to provide a nutritious breakfast for all children free of charge. Finally, HAC is advocating legislation to end stringent finger imaging requirements for food stamp eligibility. Assemblywoman Hancock spoke to us that morning in support of these bills.

Hancock and Alameda County Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker are shepherding state legislation that will create funding for domestic violence; they announced their efforts at a press conference at the BOSS Harrison Street shelter on May 14. Recently, a battered women's shelter in Berkeley closed due to auditing problems. It is hoped this legislation will provide new funding for services for victims of domestic violence. In Berkeley, City Manager Phil Kamlarz is proposing a $5,000 cut in funding to the Family Violence Law Center.

A coalition of homeless service providers, nonprofit agencies, and city employees are working together in the Berkeley Community Coalition to fight proposed cuts by the city manager. The coalition has identified other areas where revenues are available that do not necessitate cuts to homeless programs already negatively impacted by federal, state and county cuts and increasingly stringent HUD regulations. HUD audits and other governmental audits are punishing a number of nonprofit homeless agencies — not for failure to deliver services, but for minor and picayune reporting requirements.

At a public hearing on the budget held in Berkeley on May 18, many homeless clients and service staff spoke out against a $89,000 cut to the Berkeley Drop-In Center proposed by the city manager that would cause the long-standing, alternative, mental health drop-in center to close its doors. It has had administrative problems that are being addressed now that it has been reorganized under the Alameda Network of Mental Health Clients.

Clients and staff also spoke out against proposed cuts to the Women's Daytime Drop-In Center, the Jobs Consortium, BOSS, and Housing Rights Inc. The City is also pushing for major staff cuts in the First Source program that helps the homeless get work. Berkeley Mental Health is facing significant cuts in service to homeless clients.

Again as a result of a HUD audit, the Berkeley Housing Authority's Section 8 program is in serious danger. City Councilwoman Linda Maio, looking me in the eye, spoke of how the funding crisis is painful for members of the council, and added that we all have to accept pain. The problem is that, under these neoliberal nostrums, the poor always seem to get a disproportionate share of that pain.

Maio and Mayor Tom Bates still seem to support the city manager's budget, rather than the alternative budget proposed by the Berkeley Community Coalition, and strongly supported by Councilmember Kriss Worthington. Maio and Bates need to hear about what kind of pain the city manager's budget will cause. (Phone Maio at (510) 981-7170, and Mayor Bates at (510) 981-7100.)

Mayor Bates did say he supports the effort to save the safety net; and homeless advocates will seek a meeting to win his support for our alternative budget. Maybe the mayor needs to sleep out and do another homeless tour, with Linda Maio in tow. Another public hearing on the budget will occur at the City Council meeting on Tuesday, June 15, at 7 p.m. at 2140 Martin Luther King Jr. Way.

In early April, Mayor Bates was quoted in the *Daily Planet* as telling the police to enforce "anti-loitering" laws on Telegraph Avenue, probably responding to pressure from the Telegraph Area Association. In early May, Berkeley police conducted predawn sweeps of all the homeless people sleeping in the Southside between Telegraph and College Avenues, making them wake up and move on. According to my street informants, nine street youth were recently arrested.

In Alameda County, we are also faced with major cuts in mental health and other programs that aid the homeless. Despite the passage of Measure A (the sales tax initiative aimed at rescuing the Alameda *County Medical Center), Highland* Hospital is facing major layoffs. About 500 health care workers with the Alameda County Medical Center are being let go, harming health care access for the county's uninsured. Contact Vote Health for more information at (510) 653-1626.

The Alameda County budget hearings will be held from June 21-24 before the final budget adoption on June 25 at the County Administration Building at 12th and Oak Street in Oakland.

Michael Diehl is a staff organizer at BOSS. Call his voicemail at (510) 843-6800, ext. 720. E-mail: adversary359@yahoo.com

Check the new COT website at http://www.createpeaceathome.org for updated information about the County budget and other information about how to save the safety net. Also, tune into Berkeley Liberation Radio at 104.1 FM on Sundays from 12-2 p.m. for updates on "The Liberation of the Wretched" show.

Create Peace at Home

BOSS creates website on social justice and homeless issues

www.createpeaceathome.org

Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS) provides housing, health services, economic development, and social justice organizing for the homeless, disabled, and poor at 22 programs in Alameda County. The Community Organizing Team (COT), a project of BOSS, is dedicated to building public awareness and involvement in social justice organizing.

COT has created a website with extensive information and resources about social justice policies, organizing campaigns, events, actions, and personal stories of homeless and poor people. Visit often to stay up to date and get involved. http://www.createpeaceathome.org

Street Spirit — A Partnership Between AFSC and BOSS

AFSC

American Friends Service Committee

Street Spirit is a publication of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). AFSC was founded by Quakers in 1917 to provide conscientious objectors an opportunity to aid civilian victims during World War I. Today it carries on programs of service, social justice, and peace education in 22 foreign countries and 43 areas in the United States.

In 1947, the AFSC and Friends Service of Britain together received the Nobel Peace Prize for their "silent help from the nameless to the nameless." AFSC seeks to address the root causes of poverty, injustice, and war. We are called to confront, nonviolently, powerful institutions of oppression, violence and injustice.

The AFSC believes that people can change the world. Our job is to share skills, staff, and resources, and help communities organize. Once we get involved, we tend to stay: 45 years with farm workers in the Central Valley, 50 years in the California prison system, 50 years with the American Indian community, 17 years with homeless people in the Bay Area, 30 years working for Middle East peace with Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

To contact AFSC call: (415) 565-0201
American Friends Service Committee
65 Ninth St. San Francisco, CA 94103

BOSS

Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency

The *Street Spirit* vendor program is managed by Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS). BOSS was founded in 1971 to serve the deinstitutionalized mentally disabled. Over the years, the organization expanded and added programs to serve all homeless and poor people.

Today BOSS operates 30 programs in Berkeley, Oakland, and Hayward serving 3,000 families and individuals each year. Our work targets four outcomes — affordable housing, improved health, economic security, and social justice.

BOSS pursues its mission in two ways:

(1) Providing comprehensive services to help people gain independence — shelters, housing, education, training, employment, health and mental health care, youth and family services, leadership development, and more; and

(2) Attacking the root causes of poverty and homelessness through policy advocacy, grassroots organizing, community planning, and fighting to include the voice of poor people in designing implementing solutions.

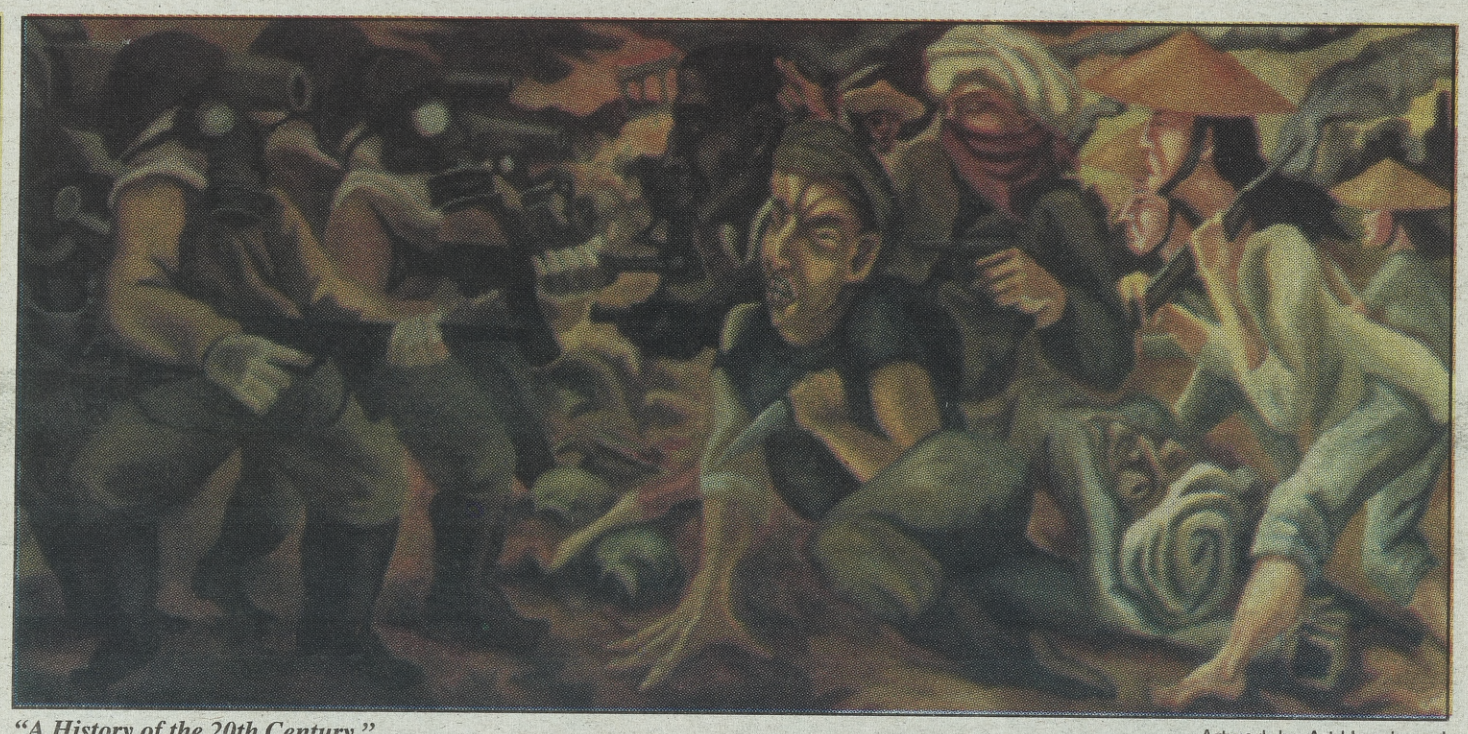
For more information, call (510) 649-1930 or visit http://www.self-sufficiency.org. If you need housing or services, please call (510) 843-3700.

Poor Leonard's Almanack

by Leonard Roy Frank
Street Spirit June 2004

Imperialism/Colonialism: An Historical Perspective

"All colonialism is fundamentally based on violence.... In some respects, fascism is a kind of colonialism at home, while colonialism is fascism abroad."



"A History of the 20th Century."

Artwork by Art Hazelwood

1. To robbery, slaughter, plunder, the Romans give the lying name of empire; they make a desert and call it peace.
GALGACUS (Caledonian chief), speech to his army before the Battle of the Grampians (Britain) where he was defeated by the Romans, 86 A.D., quoted in Tacitus (56?-120? A.D.), *The Life of Cnaeus Julius Agricola*

2. [If America were tempted to] become the dictatress of the world, she would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit.
JOHN QUINCY ADAMS (president), 1821, quoted in Michael Ignatieff, "Barbarians at the Gate?" *New York Review of Books*, 28 February 2002

3. Imperialism is based upon a persistent misrepresentation of facts and forces, chiefly through a most refined process of selection, exaggeration, and attenuation, directed by interested cliques and persons so as to distort the face of history.

The gravest peril of Imperialism lies in the state of mind of a nation which has become habituated to this deception and which has rendered itself incapable of self-criticism.

For this is the condition which Plato terms "the lie in the soul" — a lie which does not know itself to be a lie.
J. A. HOBSON (English economist), *Imperialism*, 1902

4. The English and Dutch administrators of Malaysia have done admirable work; but the profit to the Europeans in those States has always been one of the chief elements considered; whereas in the Philippines our whole attention was concentrated upon the welfare of the Filipinos themselves, if anything to the neglect of our own interests.
THEODORE ROOSEVELT, *An Autobiography*, 1913

5. Our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators. Your wealth has been stripped of you by unjust men.... It is [not] the wish of [our] government to impose upon you alien institutions.... [It is our wish] that you should prosper even as in the past, when your lands were fertile, when your ancestors gave to the world literature, science, and art, and when Baghdad city was one of the wonders of the world.... It is [our] hope that the aspirations of your philosophers and writers shall be realized and that once again the people of Baghdad shall flourish, enjoying their wealth and substance under institutions which are in consonance with their sacred laws and their racial ideals.... The Arab race may rise once more to greatness!
F. S. MAUDE (British commander of forces in Iraq), addressing the people of Mesopotamia (as Iraq was then named), 19 March 1917

6. The human race cannot forever exist half-exploiter and half-exploited.
HENRY FORD, *My Life and Work*, 1922

7. Who can describe the injustice and the cruelties that in the course of centuries [the colored peoples of the world] have suffered at the hands of Europeans?...

We and our civilization are burdened, really, with a great debt. We are not free to confer benefits on these men, or not, as we please; it is our duty. Anything we give them is not benevolence but atonement.
ALBERT SCHWEITZER (German physician and philosopher), *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest: The Experiences and Observations of a Doctor in Equatorial Africa*, 1922

8. I spent 33 years... being a high-class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer for capitalism.... I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1916. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City [Bank] boys to collect revenue in. I helped in the rape of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street.
SMEDLEY D. BUTLER (general), speech before the American Legion shortly before his retirement, 1931

9. Imperialism: The aims of your neighbor; opposite to your own aims, which is called Foreign Policy.
LEO ROSTEN (writer), "Political Lexicon," *New Republic*, 3 July 1935

10. We must expand or explode.
BENITO MUSSOLINI, quoted in George Seldes, *Sawdust Caesar*, 1935

11. To the nation as a whole its colonies may be unprofitable, and actually costly. But to the politically powerful minority of financiers with capital to invest, of industrialists with surplus goods to dispose of, these same colonies may be sources of handsome profits.
ALDOUS HUXLEY (English writer), "War," *Ends and Means*, 1937

12. I know he's a bastard, but he's *my* bastard.
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (1882-1945), on Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, quoted in Elliott Roosevelt and James Brough, *A Rendezvous with Destiny*, 1975

13. Western democracy, as it functions today, is diluted Nazism or Fascism. At best it is merely a cloak to hide the Nazi and Fascist tendencies of imperialism.
MOHANDAS K. GANDHI, quoted in *Harijan*, 18 May 1940

14. *Eleanor Roosevelt* (haranguing Churchill about British imperialism in India): The Indians have suffered for years under British oppression.
Churchill: Are we talking about the brown-skinned Indians in India who have multiplied under benevolent British rule, or are we speaking about the red-skinned Indians in America who, I understand, are now almost extinct?
WINSTON CHURCHILL, during a World War II visit to the White House, quoted in Richard Pearson, "Statesman, Soldier, Savior," *Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, 2 October 1995

15. The responsibility of the great states is to serve and not to dominate the world.
HARRY S. TRUMAN, message to Congress, 16 April 1945, four days after succeeding Franklin D. Roosevelt as President

16. After the Greeks and Romans had conquered the world by force of arms, the world took its conquerors captive by converting them to new religions which addressed their message to all human souls without discriminating between rulers and subjects or between Greeks, Orientals, and barbarians. Is something like this historic denouement of the Graeco-Roman story going to be written into the unfinished history of the world's encounter with the West? We cannot say, since we cannot foretell the future. We can only see that something which has actually happened once, in another episode of history, must at least be one of the possibilities that lie ahead of us.
ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE (English historian), "The World and the Greeks and Romans," *The World and the West*, 1953

17. With us [Europeans], to be a man is to be an accomplice of colonialism, since all of us without exception have profited by colonial exploitation.
JEAN-PAUL SARTRE (French philosopher), preface to Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961

18. All colonialism is fundamentally based on violence. Just as fascism can be seen as the application of colonial methods to one's own country, so colonialism can be looked at as the application of fascistic methods to a foreign country. In some respects, fascism is a kind of colonialism at home, while colonialism is fascism abroad.
FREDRIC WERTHAM (German-born U.S. psychiatrist), *A Sign for Cain*, 1966

19. Imperialism does not have to take the form of direct rule over the foreign population. In the twentieth century, the indirect form of "neoimperialism" has increasingly replaced the old-fashioned direct kind; it is more subtle and less visible but no less effective a form of imperialism.

In this situation, the imperial State rules the foreign population through its effective control over native client-rulers.
MURRAY N. ROTHBARD (social philosopher), *For a New Liberty*, 1978

20. History is replete with examples of empires mounting impressive military campaigns on the cusp of their impending economic collapse.
ERIC ALTERMAN (journalist), *Sound and Fury*, 1992

21. Empires have no interest in operating within an international system; they aspire to *be* the international system.
HENRY A. KISSINGER, *Diplomacy*, 1994

22. The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist — McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps.
THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN (journalist), "From Supercharged Financial Markets to Osama bin Laden, the Emerging Global Order Demands an Enforcer. That's America's New Burden," *New York Times Magazine*, 28 March 1999

23. The days when humanity can hope to save itself from force with force are over. None of the *structures of violence* — not the balance of power, not the balance of terror, not empire — can any longer rescue the world from the use of violence, now grown apocalyptic. Force can lead only to more force, not to peace. Only a turn to *structures of cooperative power* can offer hope. To choose that path, the United States would, as a first order of business, have to choose the *American republic* over the *American empire*, and then, on the basis of the principles that underlie the republic, join with other nations to build cooperative structures as a basis for peace. [Italics added.]
JONATHAN SCHELL (university professor, writer), *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People*, 2002

24. Great powers hate to lose at anything. Once embarked on a course of action — even if it is a tragic mistake — they feel a compulsion to succeed that is not felt by smaller powers. Great powers' ambitions are far-flung, and if they fail in one place, they are more likely to be defied in another.

They are as concerned for the reputation of their power as for its substance; indeed, the reputation is a good part of the substance. In the nineteenth century, the name for that reputation was "prestige." In the nuclear age, it became "credibility."
JONATHAN SCHELL "Tautology in Action," *Nation*, 17 November 2003

25. No individual nation can stand up to the project of Corporate Globalization on its own. Time and again we have seen that when it comes to the neo-liberal project, the heroes of our times are suddenly diminished.

Extraordinary, charismatic men, giants in Opposition, when they seize power and become Heads of State, they become powerless on the global stage. I'm thinking here of President Lula of Brazil. Lula was the hero of the World Social Forum last year. This year he's busy implementing IMF [International Monetary Fund] guidelines, reducing pension benefits and purging radicals from the Workers' Party. I'm thinking also of ex-President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela. Within two years of taking office in 1994, his government genuflected with hardly a caveat to the Market God. It instituted a massive program of privatization and structural adjustment, which has left millions of people homeless, jobless and without water and electricity.
ARUNDHATI ROY (Indian writer), World Social Forum speech, Bombay, "Do Turkeys Enjoy Thanksgiving," countercurrents.org, 19 January 2004

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Leonard Roy Frank is the editor of *Random House Webster's Quotationary* (1998. This year Random House published his *Freedom: Quotes and Passages from the World's Greatest Freethinkers* and 5 gift books titled *Inspiration*, *Love*, *Money*, *Wisdom*, and *Wit*, each subtitled *The Greatest Things Ever Said.*